World / A10
Britney Spears says she's pregnant with first child

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Pfizer pulls out 2 pain relievers on BFAD order

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Finally, Senate OKs VAT bill, lifts power exemption

Metro / A23
Caloocan row over Malonzo's son is father's problem, says Palace

Lifestyle / C1
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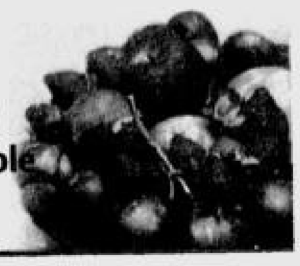

Ex-coup leader now AFP's youngest general

By Fe Zamora

THE LEADER of the mutinous Young Officers Union is now a general.

Col. Danilo Lim was promoted to star-rank status effective April 10, making him at 49 the youngest brigadier general in the Armed Forces of the Philippines. He's also the first

EX-COUP/ A22

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Thursday, April 14, 2005 ★★★ 54 pages / 5 sections / Vol. 20 / No. 125 P18

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Fat cops now leaner, meaner and even sexier

By Christian V. Esguerra

DI NA MUKHANG PULIS YAN!

FROM fat and sloppy to fit and sexy.

For 55 of the 65 policemen who took part in a Philippine National Police's diet program two

FAT COPS/ A8

Ex-Pasig solon shot dead

REM ZAMORA

LAST MEAL: Former Pasig Rep. Henry Lanot, who had an election protest pending at the Supreme Court against Pasig City Mayor Vicente Eusebio, was gunned down at a restaurant on Shaw Boulevard. PDI PHOTO

And killer casually walks out

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and Luige A. del Puerto

FORMER Pasig City Rep. Henry Lanot had just finished lunch and was savoring his dessert in a Mandaluyong restaurant when a man shot him at close range, hitting him in the lower part of his right ear.

The gunman then casually walked out of the restaurant in full view of the security guards, according to the police.

Lanot, 56, who had a pending electoral protest against Mayor Vicente "Enteng" Eusebio, died while undergoing treatment.

"He passed away. He did not make it," Pasig City Rep. Dudut Jaworski, Lanot's political ally, told reporters as he emerged from the Rizal Medical Center intensive care unit at about 4 p.m. yesterday.

"We are still investigating the motive--for the shooting," said Manila police chief Deputy Director General Avelino Razon.

Lanot was proclaimed winner of congressional elections in Pasig City during the 2001 elections but in June last year, shortly after his term would have expired, Lanot was unseated after the electoral tribunal ruled that his rival, Noel Cariño, was the real winner of the election.

EX-PASIG/ A8

Pagcor bid for text gaming opposed

By Clarissa S. Batino

SMART Communications Inc. and Pilipino Telephone Corp. are blocking plans of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) to facilitate text gaming once it had secured a special access code from the National Telecommunications Commission.

Rogelio Quevedo, head of the legal department of Smart and Piltel, said the state-owned gaming agency had not provided enough safeguards to prevent minors from joining the text games.

He suspected that the state-owned Pagcor would try to use the power of text messaging

PAGCOR/ A22

Army troops not moving out of Abra

By Luige del Puerto and Dona Pazzibugan

ARMY soldiers stationed in terror-gripped Abra will remain in their posts, even as the entire provincial police force has been ordered replaced for allowing the province to degenerate into lawlessness.

Philippine Army chief Maj. Gen. Generoso Senga said he saw "no reason" to replace members of the 41st Infantry Battalion stationed in Abra.

Senga said he was not aware of any request for the unit's relief being made to the Department of National Defense.

Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes on Tuesday sacked the entire Abra provincial police force for allowing themselves to serve

ARMY/ A22

PNP insists Esperat murder case solved

By Luige A. del Puerto and Armand N. Nocum

THE PHILIPPINE National Police is standing by its findings on the murder of journalist Marlene Esperat despite Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez's contention that other parties may be involved.

"We stand by our position," PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao said yesterday. Asked to comment on Gonzalez's statement to reporters on Tuesday, Lomibao quickly said: "You just ask Secretary Gonzalez. Just interview him."

Chief Supt. Antonio Billones, head of the Central Mindanao police, said that "as far as the police are concerned, this case is already solved." He said the four alleged killers had already been arrested—*"Sila na yun"*—and that the PNP had shifted its "focus" to determining the identity of the mastermind.

Malacañang is clearly siding with the police on the issue, as indicated by the statement issued by Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye:

PNP INSISTS/ A8

One bill costs ₱3M in House, ₱8M in Senate

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PASSAGE of a single bill in Congress costs millions in taxpayers' money.

About P3 million is required to pass a bill in the House of Representatives and another P8.4 million in the Senate, according to the estimate of a Country Governance Assessment funded by the Asian Development Bank.

The cost estimate was based on the annual budgets of the two chambers of Congress in relation to the number of measures passed.

The study found that the establishment of more working committees in both chambers had not translated into better legislative output.

"House performance in terms of measures processed left much to be desired," the study said, adding that from the 8th to the 11th Congress (1987-2001), only 6 percent of the 81,186 measures filed was approved.

In the 8th Congress, the passing rate was 3 percent, which only slightly improved to 6.6 percent in the 9th Congress and to 10 percent in the 10th Congress.

"The Senate's performance is not any

ONE BILL/ A8

VAL HANDUMON

A DUMAGAT family just makes it across the Macua river in Doña Remedios Trinidad, San Ildefonso, Bulacan, before Manila Water opens the Umiray tunnel in Norzagaray, Bulacan. The MWSS rushed the repair of the flood-damaged tunnel that brings water from Quezon province to Angat Dam. Now 94 percent complete, it is providing sufficient water to the dam in Bulacan, according to the MWSS.

For 1st time, African bet could be pope

By Lito B. Zulueta

VATICAN CITY—For the first time in 2,000 years, there's a real possibility that a black African may become pope and make a clean break from the Roman Catholic Church's alleged Europe-centered bias.

Cardinal Francis Arinze of Nigeria has become one of the most convincing "papabile" or perceived papal contenders when the conclave opens Monday to elect the successor of John Paul II.

So strong are Arinze's prospects that the Vatican joke now is that the only ones who do not want an African pope are the Jesuits, whose superior general is known as the "black

FOR 1ST TIME/ A22

Palace confirms PCA head is out

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

"VALBUENA? Didn't she come from the PCA?" Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said at a press conference in Malacañang.

Philippine Coconut Authority administrator Evangeline Valbuena, a bosom friend of President Macapagal-Arroyo, has not even tendered her resignation but Malacañang is already referring to her in the past tense.

Valbuena is claiming that she is being forcibly eased out of office for opposing the use of coconut levy funds to bankroll an P8.4-billion hybrid coconut nursery in Agusan del Sur allegedly being pushed by Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap.

Yap has denied Valbuena's allegation.

Valbuena also claimed that a shadowy power broker in Malacañang, Philippine In-

PALACE/ A22

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Second FRONTPAGE

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Extreme Northern Luzon will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms. SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: CHONA GALANG, PDI RESEARCH/04/14/05

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Senate finally passes VAT bill

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

AFTER five months of heated deliberations among senators and grumbling from Malacañang, the Senate finally approved on third and final reading last night the expanded value-added tax and shift the battle to the bicameral conference committee.

VAT HUDDLE: Senate President Franklin Drilon grimaces during a break in yesterday's special session on the expanded value-added tax bill. Joining the huddle are Senators Francis Pangilinan, Manny Villar, Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Ralph Recto. JESS YUSON

The Senate version, which was approved at 10:45 p.m. with a 14-6 vote, has a surprise provision—exempting the more than 16.2 million households or residential consumers from the 10-percent VAT on power.

With the approval, the next and toughest battle shifts to the bicameral conference committee where the Senate and the House of Representatives are expected to come up with compromises to hammer out a final VAT reform measure.

Those who voted in favor of VAT were administration senators Senate President Franklin Drilon, Ralph Recto who sponsored the bill, Rodolfo Biazon, Mar Roxas, Ramon Magsaysay Jr., Joker Arroyo, Manuel Villar, Juan Flavier, Francis Pangilinan, Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. and Richard Gordon and opposition senators Serge Osmeña, Edgardo Angara and Juan Ponce Enrile.

Six senators voted against the measure - Pia Cayetano, Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Luisa Ejercito and her son Jinggoy Estrada, Jamby Madrigal and Panfilo Lacson.

Cayetano, irked by the deletion of a provision earmarking a portion of VAT revenues to education, was the only administration senator who voted against the Palace-sponsored measure.

There was a tense moment when Enrile changed his vote from no to yes after he was persuaded by Drilon over the objections of Senate minority leader Pimentel.

Senators Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Lito Lapid and Alfredo Lim were not present during the voting.

Villar said he wanted to vote against VAT bill because he felt VAT is not the only way out of the fiscal crisis but reconsidered.

Gordon said he voted yes hesitatingly because the Senate version was far from ideal.

Santiago, whose motion to exempt the power sector from VAT was defeated by two votes, is hoping to see a "triumph" of the House version. She said the very close vote on the inclusion of the power sector from VAT would provide ammunition for the House to insist on its version.

The salient features of the Senate version:

- Retains the 10-percent VAT rate unlike the House version which raises the VAT rate to 12 percent.
- Lifts exemptions enjoyed by many sectors including power, petroleum, domestic airlines and ships, and professionals such as doctors and lawyers.
- Seeks to "mitigate" the impact of VAT on power by repealing the franchise tax of power companies.
- Repeals excise tax on "socially sensitive" fuel products like kerosene, diesel, LPG and bunker fuel and reduces excise tax on regular and premium gasoline to slightly offset the VAT impact.
- Increases corporate income tax from 32 percent to 35 percent until 2009 when the rate reverts to 32 percent.
- Sets the threshold for sale of goods and services covered by VAT to P1.5 million. House and lots worth P2.5 million and above would be subject to VAT.

Sen. Sergio Osmeña III said the Senate version could raise P60 billion at a 70 percent efficiency and up to P80 billion at 100-percent collection.

Administration Senators Santiago and Mar Roxas and Juan Ponce Enrile of the opposition tried but failed to prevent the lifting of exemption long enjoyed by the P300-billion power sector, the single most contentious provision in the Senate version. They were outvoted 11-9.

Those who voted along with Santiago, Roxas and Enrile were Senators Richard Gordon, Ramon Magsaysay Jr., Rodolfo Biazon, Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. from the administration and Luisa Ejercito and her son Jinggoy Estrada from the opposition.

The 11 who voted to subject power to VAT were administration senators Ralph Recto, chair of the Senate ways and means committee, Manuel Villar, Joker Arroyo, Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, Pia Cayetano and Senate President Pro-Tempore Juan Flavier and opposition senators Edgardo Angara, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino "Pimentel Jr., Alfredo Lim, Serge Osmeña and Jamby Madrigal.

After the Santiago amendment was defeated, Enrile sprang a surprise when he introduced the amendment exempting residential power users from VAT.

Enrile, who was returned to the Senate in 2004 on the strength of a catchy campaign against high power rates and the slogan "Problema nyo, sagot ko," said he had long thought about this proposal.

"I (reserved) it as an alternative if they will VAT power," Enrile said.

Thus the Senate version stated that "the VAT on sales of electricity by generation companies, transmission companies and distribution companies, as well as services of franchise grantees of electric utilities shall not apply to household consumers."

It said VAT shall be "absorbed and paid" by the generation, transmission and distribution companies and "the seller shall not pass on the cost of such tax payments either directly or indirectly to the consumer, it being the express intent of this act that the tax herein levied shall be borne exclusively by the companies."

On the motion of Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, the Senate approved a one-year imprisonment and a fine of P2 million for the first offense, P3 million for the second offense, and P4 million for the third time and for knowingly violating the no-pass on provision.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said this was "approved in principle" last Tuesday night but was still subject to further deliberations yesterday.

As intended by the Senate, the "no-pass on" provision will be a relief to 12,451,989 household customers of electric cooperatives all over the country and 3,760,342 household consumers of the Manila Electric Co. who will not see a 10-percent increase in their electric bills.

The 10-percent VAT would affect the 10.6 million commercial and 8.2 million industrial consumers of electric power.

Poll losers set to join Cabinet in new revamp

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo will shuffle her Cabinet men next month, Malacañang's third major revamp in 12 months, apparently to reward losing candidates in her campaign ticket or get people from the opposition to join her administration.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said that unlike previous revamps, the President has opted to keep those she planned to nominate close to her chest.

"She might have something at the back of her mind and normally the President intimates it to us. But this time, she has not given any signal to me or (Press Secretary Ignacio) Bunye," Ermita said.

The President is keeping silent on her plans because Ermita said she does not want to "complicate things."

In a press conference, President Arroyo hinted that she had a couple of names in mind that she wanted to be in her Cabinet by next month but she wanted to keep her choices under wraps till next month.

"In these things, the President is very, very careful because, first, she does not want to touch the sensibility of a Cabinet member on something that will be done in May but will be reported now. Second, there will be lobbying and you know the President is a political leader and there are so many friends that might get involved in lobbying for certain positions," Ermita said.

The President, who wanted a fresh start in her new term, made her first major Cabinet revamp shortly after being declared the election winner where she carried over some officials in her previous term and named them into different position. Her second major Cabinet overhaul involved her economic team to underscore her strategy of focusing on first solving the government's fiscal crisis.

Palace closes book on flap by US envoy

By Gil C. Cabacungan, Volt Contreras and TJ Burgonio

MALACAÑANG has ruled out the filing of a diplomatic protest against Washington after a US envoy committed a diplomatic faux pas by describing Mindanao as a potential "Afghanistan situation" and the new "Mecca for terrorism."

"I don't think the Department of Foreign Affairs is considering other actions aside from the note verbale. We don't want to blow up the issue. But we're calling their attention that we are not insensitive to this," said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita in a briefing.

US Embassy Charge d' Affaires Joseph Mussomeli was summoned to the DFA after he was quoted on Australian TV as saying that Mindanao was "lawless," its border "porous," and was "at risk of becoming like an Afghanistan situation."

But Mussomeli, the second-ranking American diplomat, claimed that his statements on TV were taken out of context and that he had nothing to apologize for.

"It's enough that US authorities know our displeasure," Ermita said. "But considering that we have good relationships with the US who is helping us with development programs, probably we should focus on the positive aspect."

In a statement, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said: "The Afghanistan statement is a close book in so far as we are concerned. The Philippine government has stated its case and done the proper sanction. We hope this unfortunate incident is not repeated."

But Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo is still hurting.

A day after issuing a strongly worded censure of the US diplomat, Romulo continued to show his displeasure by not even mentioning Mussomeli by name when the issue cropped up in a press briefing.

He kept referring to the US envoy as "a certain US Embassy official" even as Romulo called the issue a "closed book."

But Mussomeli feels the controversy he generated drew fresh attention to "terrible" poverty and unemployment in Mindanao.

"There's always a silver lining to these things," the US envoy said in a radio interview. "I guess everybody is now thinking and talking about the (Mindanao) situation more."

But lawmakers are not mollified by the envoy's explanation for his "boorish remarks" about Mindanao.

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel noted that Mussomeli merely explained his side, but failed to apologize.

He maintained that it was a "taboo" for a diplomat like Mussomeli to have uttered such remarks. "As a diplomat, Mussomeli's remarks were very undiplomatic to say the least. They were supercilious, arrogant and boorish."

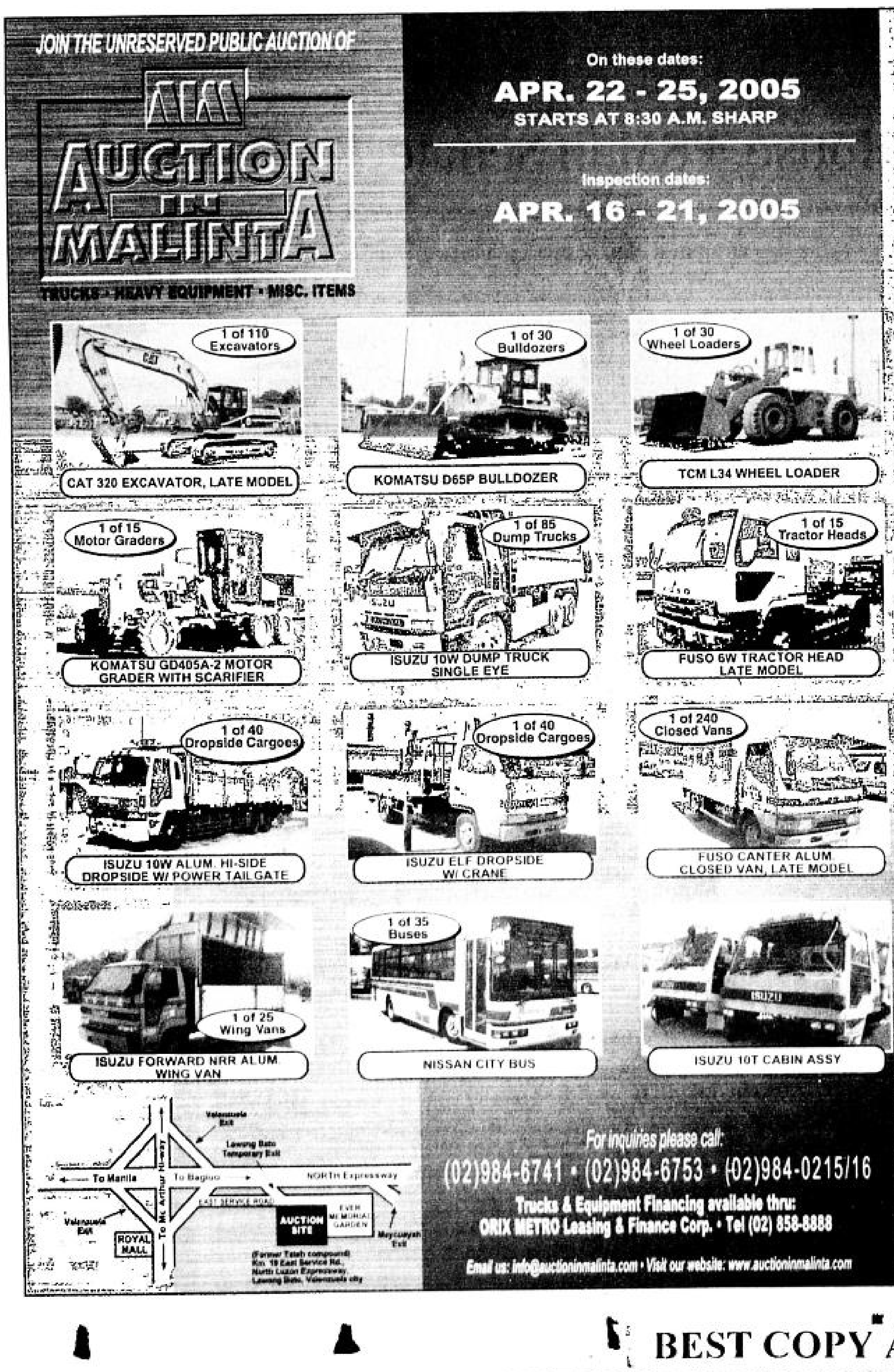
Peso breaks 54—barrier

THE PESO rallied into the 53 level against the US dollar yesterday before closing at 54.10 on expectation that the value added tax (VAT) bill would finally be passed.

The local currency opened at 54.12, broke past the 54-barrier and hit an intra-day high of 53.96 before closing at 54.10. Volume at the Philippine Dealing System hit $441 million.

"The peso is reacting positively to the expectation that the VAT will be passed shortly," said Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr.

"It is an important measure watched closely by the market," he said.



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Solon says P2B of Marcos wealth missing

By Philip C. Tubeza

AT LEAST P2 billion of the forfeited Marcos ill-gotten wealth released for land reform are unaccounted for, a lawmaker said yesterday.

Akbayan party-list Rep. Loretta Anne Rosales said government officials failed to account for the P2 billion that was supposed to be used for land acquisition and distribution for the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

Rosales made the comment after the House oversight committee conducted a hearing on the government's use of the P8.8 billion of Marcos ill-gotten money that was released last year for the CARP.

The committee ordered the Commission on Audit to submit its total liquidation report on how government agencies used the P8.8 billion. It also summoned Agrarian Reform Secretary Rene Villa and Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap to attend the next hearing.

Questionable

"This is highly questionable. And we're talking about Marcos funds here that were stolen," Rosales said.

She said that while government officials claimed that at least P3 billion was used for land acquisition and distribution last year, government had processed only 30,000 hectares of land.

Rosales explained that with that money spent, the government should have acquired nearly 900,000 hectares for distribution since the government bought lands at P3,352 per hectare.

"It should be 894,000 hectares. In other words, close to 900,00 ha. So what are we talking about? Are you saying that it's all in the process? But that's questionable," Rosales said.

Rosales said that at P3,352 per hectare, the 30,000 hectares of land cost government only more than P90 million.

Porfeited money

Rosales also questioned the use of forfeited Marcos money for the controversial Ginintuang Masaganang Ani (GMA) Rice Program of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

"This was part of the P8.8 billion but this was not spelled out," she said.

Rosales said the government used P544 million for the GMA Rice Program although it had no beneficiaries.

"DAR said they gave DA a list of beneficiaries but I've done my own research and the DA does not have a list. So where did the money go? This should not be taken lightly," she said.

She added that GMA Rice Program failed to follow the presidential agrarian reform program council mandate of a 70:30 distribution scheme between land acquisition and program beneficiary development.

Gov't regroups in prosecution of tax credit scam

By Michelle V. Remo

AFTER five fruitless years of trying to pin down the perpetrators of the tax-credit scam, the government has come up with new administrative strategies to revitalize the prosecution of the cases.

Five agencies involved in pursuing the cases—the finance department, the internal revenue and customs bureaus, the offices of the Solicitor General and Ombudsman—have agreed to coordinate efforts and share resources and information to strengthen prosecution.

"We are now strengthening our lines of communication to make sure the prosecution is well-supported. We will take an inventory of all the cases and prioritize those that are winnable, given the evidence available," said finance undersecretary Emmanuel Bonoan, who heads the Revenue Integrity Protection Service (RIPS), the finance department's anti-corruption unit.

Since 1999, these agencies have been trying without much success to go after those who allegedly deprived the government of billions of pesos in revenues from illegally obtained tax credit certificates (TCCs).

Tax credits are essentially refund payments made by the government on duties and taxes paid by export enterprises for imported materials that they use. Some companies, however, fraudulently acquired these TCCS and used them to offset payment of taxes, resulting in revenue losses for the government.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs have filed several collection cases against several of these companies.

The BIR lost P2.3 billion while the BoC lost about P2 billion in the scam, according to Ernesto Hiansen, head of the One-Stop Shop Duty and Credit Drawback Center (OSS), the agency that processes TCC applications.

The OSG and the Ombudsman filed criminal cases against suspected perpetrators of the scam.

Hiansen said part of the reason why prosecution efforts have been unsuccessful was the lack of communication and the weak information-sharing among the government agencies concerned. Each of these agencies were working on their own cases without much assistance from the others, he explained.

This time, however, prosecution efforts would be coordinated, with the OSS serving as the clearinghouse of information. This means the OSS will be given updates and information on the cases that the agencies are working on, and will in turn provide them with data that they need.

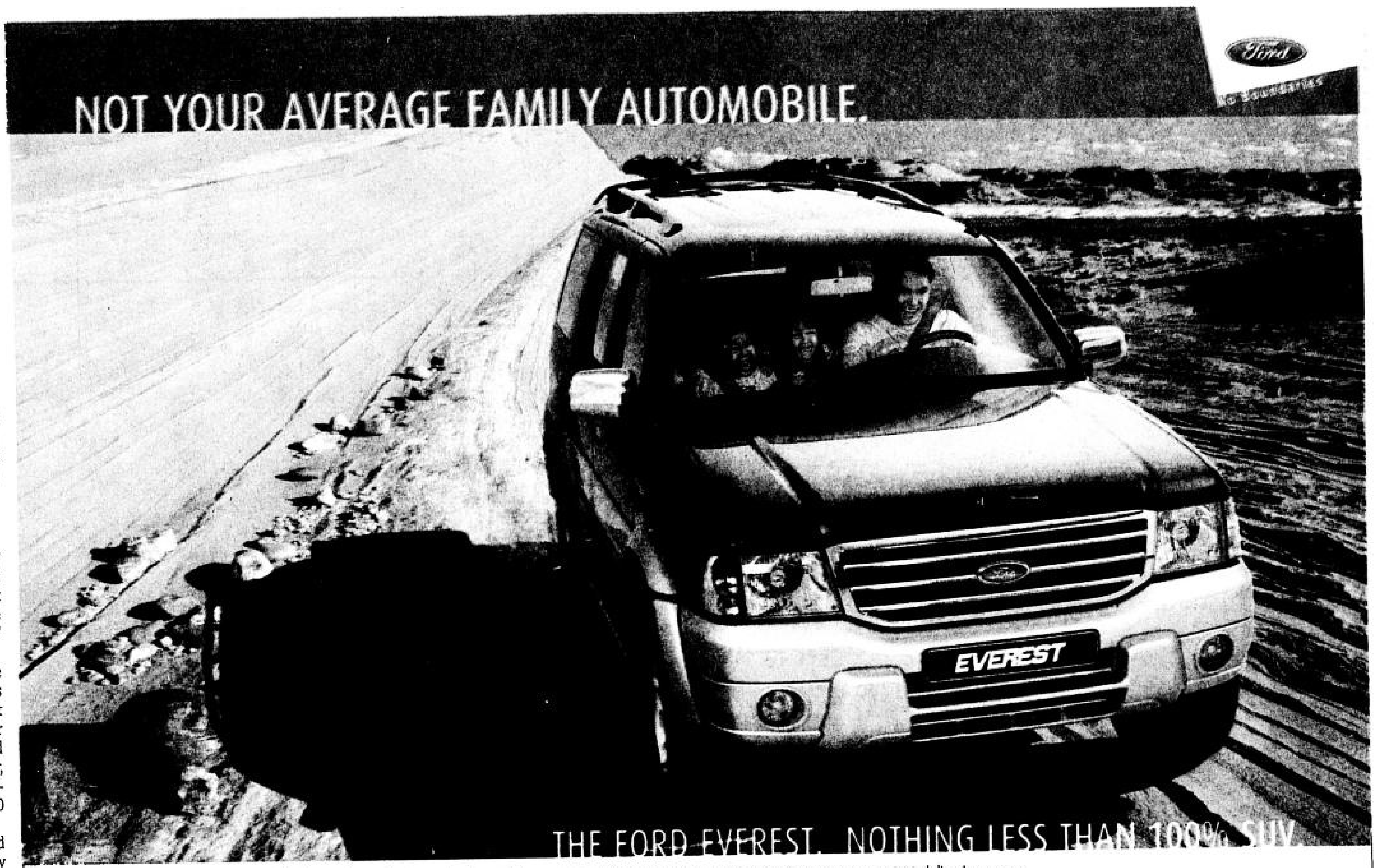
"Now we are trying to cut through the difficulties we had in the past. The public rightfully wants results of the TCC cases," Bonoan said.

According to Hiansen, once the inventory has been completed, the agencies would decide which of the cases should be prioritized. The cases involving the biggest amounts, such as those involving the Chingkoe companies and the Tan family, would be given priority.

Hiansen said there are a total of 125 companies involved in the tax credit scam. Of this number, 64 were original grantees of the TCCs, while 61 were transferees, or those that bought TCCs from the grantees.

The transferees include Pilipinas Shell and Petron Corp., which the BIR has charged.

The original grantees include several firms in the Chingkoe group and garment companies owned by the family headed by Genoveva Tan.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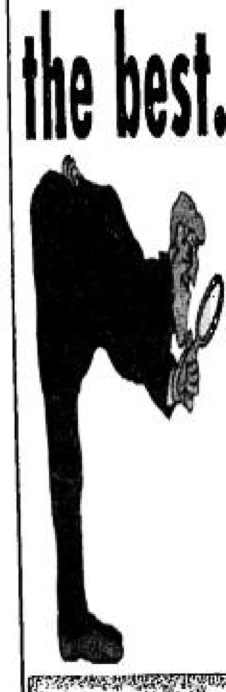

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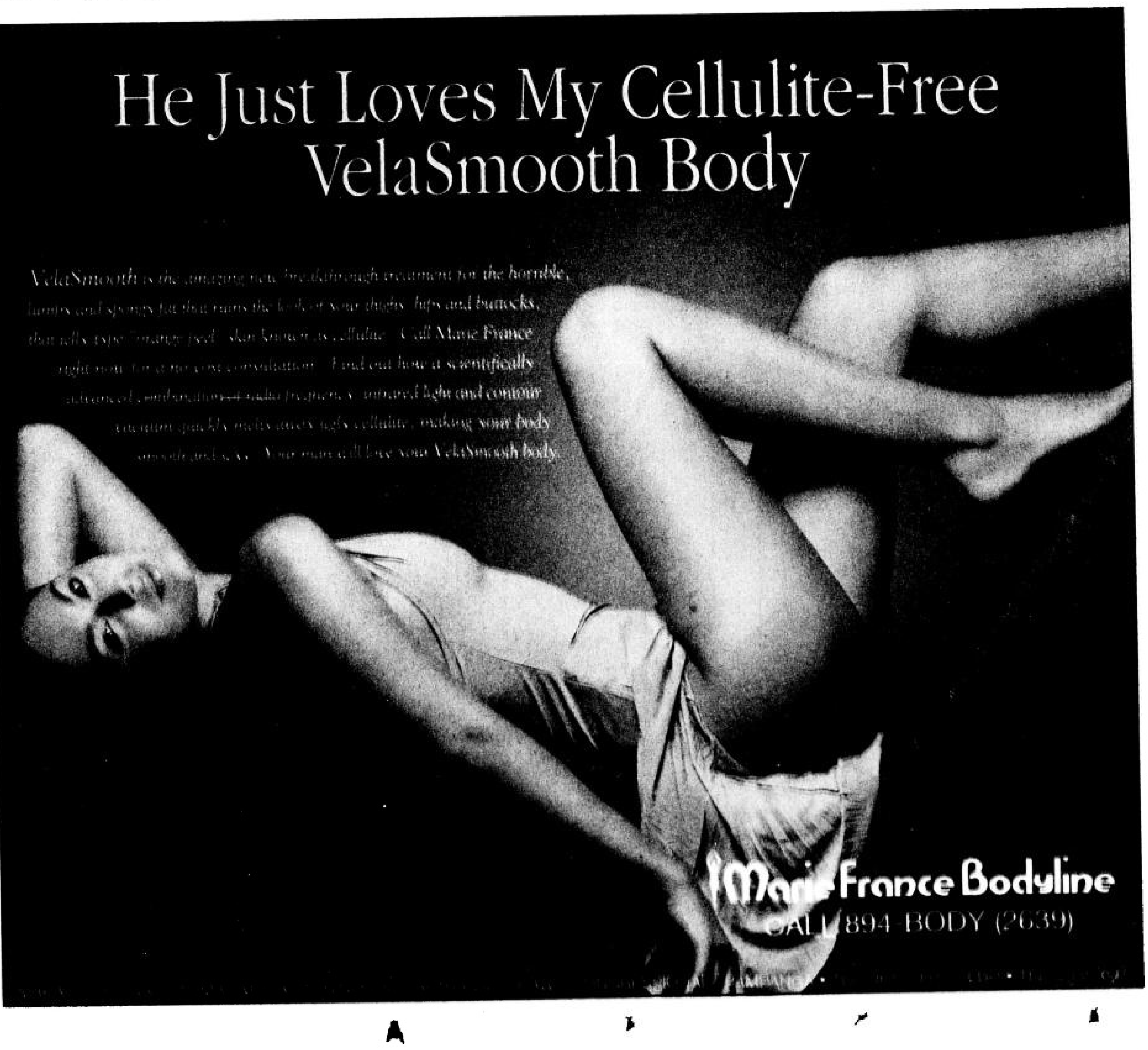
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April 14, 2005 • 9 a.m.
University Theater
Commencement Speaker:
Hon. ANTONIO T. CARPIO
Associate Justice, Supreme Court of the Philippines

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION and the COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION-MANILA [BSBA Special Degree Program (BBM), BSBA Banking and Finance, BSBA Economics, BSBA Management and BSBA Marketing]
April 14, 2005 • 3 p.m.
University Theater
Commencement Speaker:
Dr. JESUS T. TANCHANCO SR.
President, UE Foundation for Research and Advanced Studies Inc.

COLLEGE OF COMPUTER STUDIES AND SYSTEMS and the COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION-MANILA (BS in Accountancy and BSBA Management Accounting)
April 15, 2005 • 9 a.m.
University Theater
Commencement Speaker:
Mr. MARIO T. MANANGHAYA
Chairman and Managing Partner, KPMG Laya Mananghaya & Co.

ALL COLLEGES—CALOOCAN CAMPUS
April 14, 2005 • 4:30 p.m. • UE Caloocan Field
Commencement Speaker:
Hon. ENRICO R. ECHIVERRI
Mayor, Caloocan City

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LABORATORY SCHOOLS
April 11, 2005 • 3 p.m. • University Theater
Commencement Speaker:
Mr. RAMON B. SANTOS
Vice President, Planters Products, and Faculty Member, UE Graduate School

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Summa Cum Laude and College Distinguished Graduate Awardee
College of Fine Arts

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College of Fine Arts (CFA)

BRYAN RAYMOND V. BOLANTE
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CCSS

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CCSS

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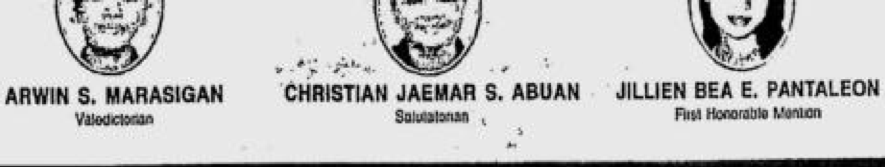
DANILO V. RODOLFA III
Second Honorable Mention

KARL KEVIN C. FAJERMO
Third Honorable Mention

MITZI G. LAQUI
Fourth Honorable Mention

ELEMENTARY LABORATORY SCHOOL



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Philhealth lost P520M to fraudulent claims, says chief

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—The state-owned Philippine Health Insurance Corp. lost P520 million in fraudulent claims from hospitals and doctors in 2004, PhilHealth president and chief executive officer Francisco Duque III said here.

The amount was 4 percent of the P13 billion that PhilHealth paid in benefits for the same period, Duque said in reply to an INQUIRER question during a press briefing here on Tuesday night.

"Sayang pa rin yun. (It's still a waste.) P520 million is P520 million. If we're able to prevent all of that (fraud) then we would have more money to pay for higher benefits to our members. That is why we are very focused and dedicated in addressing this problem," he said.

Bloating the number of days of confinement and the medicines or falsely reporting surgical procedures that were not actually undertaken were among the schemes made to defraud PhilHealth, he said.

About 300 cases of this nature, mostly in hospitals in Mindanao, are being investigated, he said.

But Duque said the delivery of health insurance benefits in Mindanao would not be affected by these malpractices.

PhilHealth's showing in this area was still below the 10-12 percent rate of fraudulent claims recorded in the health insurance sector in the United States, he said.

In 1995, between 30 and 33 percent of the payments made by the defunct Medicare went to counterfeit accounts, Duque said, citing data from former health secretary and now Sen. Juan Flavier.

But Duque said PhilHealth's financial viability was strong, saying its fund has grown to P52 billion.

As for its sponsored programs among indigents, who now count 31 million or less than half of the agency's 69 million total membership, Duque said additional fund sources were being eyed to sustain the benefits.

These include tapping 2.5 percent of share (about P400 million) from "sin" taxes, 5 percent of revenues from the proposed expanded value added tax or getting an additional national government counterpart fund of P500 million. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Talks with MILF rebels to resume next week, but deal is unlikely

TALKS to end more than 30 years of Muslim rebellion in the southern Philippines resume next week, but an agreement would remain elusive, the chief rebel negotiator said yesterday.

Mohaqher Iqbal told Reuters by phone that the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) remained confident a "positive outcome" could be achieved at the end of three days of technical meetings, brokered by Malaysia, in Kuala Lumpur.

"As a negotiator, I have to be an optimist," he said. "But I expect rough sailing during the negotiations. We're not dealing with very easy issues." Technical panels from the two sides are struggling to strike a deal on a Muslim ancestral homeland in the country's south, one of the most thorny issues on the table. Talks are due to resume on April 18, slightly delayed by a mix up in schedules.

Since 1997, when the talks began, the government and the 11,000-strong MILF have agreed on a truce and a package to rebuild Mindanao's conflict areas. The three-decade separatist rebellion has killed at least 120,000 and stunted development.

The MILF is claiming a wide swathe of Muslim-majority areas in the resource-rich south that it says is the ancestral homeland of the Moro people. The issue is complicated by a recent mining law allowing foreign concessions in rebel-held territories.

Iqbal said there was a need to discuss the finer details of a political deal, including the demobilization of troops, after the ancestral land issue is settled.

He said there was still a lot of work to be done, but added the MILF was satisfied with the role of Malaysia in brokering the talks, reinforced by Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar's brief trip on Tuesday on the troubled southern Mindanao island.

Albar met over lunch with representatives from the MILF, the local government and army officials, giving firm assurances that Malaysia remained committed to the talks until the two sides reach a peace deal.

Malaysia also headed a 60-member peace monitor team overseeing a ceasefire between the government and rebels, holding since it was reimposed in July 2003. *Reuters*

14 RP fishermen nabbed off Sabah

KUALA LUMPUR—Fourteen Filipinos have been detained by Malaysian marine police for suspected illegal fishing in waters off eastern Sabah, local media said Wednesday.

The Filipinos, aged between 15 and 40, were arrested Monday after a high-speed boat chase for more than one hour, Paul Khiu, marine police chief of the state capital, Kota Kinabalu, was quoted as saying by the Bernama news agency.

They had no travel documents and were believed to have been fishing with bombs based on items—including a hose, rubber cork, bottles and matches—found aboard their two boats, he said.

"It took half an hour to chase the first boat and another one hour the second one," he said. "Not only did they come here to do illegal fishing, they also came to bomb our fish and bomb our corals. Definitely, we don't condone this kind of activities."

The suspects are expected to be charged in court under the Fishery Act which provides for a maximum fine of one million ringgit ($263,158 dollars), he said, adding this was the first case of suspected fish-bombing involving foreigners. *AFP*

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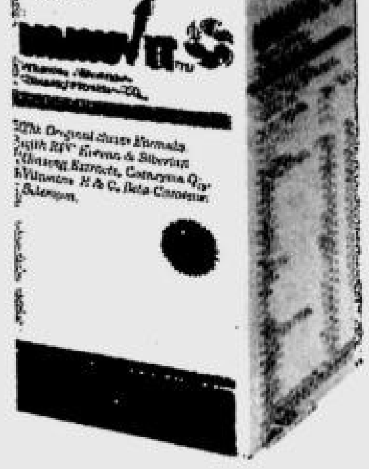

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Gordon seeks probe of Coast Guard on maritime safety

By TJ Burgonio and Leila B. Salaverria

SENATOR RICHARD Gordon has called for an inquiry into the capability of the Philippine Coast Guard to enforce maritime safety rules, noting that four fishermen who were lost at sea and later rescued lacked the basic maritime equipment crucial to their survival.

Pedro Pialan, Ronald Mercado, Zaldy Takatane and Jimmy Francis set out to sea from the Subic Bay in Zambales on March 24, equipped only with a single-side band radio, but lacked a global positioning system (GPS), navigation maps, flares, among others, he said.

A GPS would have allowed them to determine and transmit their exact coordinates to authorities.

"These fishermen did not even have wristwatches," Gordon, who requested US military to dispatch a search plane to comb the vast sea for the missing fishermen, lamented in a privilege speech Tuesday afternoon.

If at all, the "most valuable lesson" that could be gained from the fishermen's ordeal, which ended in a rescue, "is the danger of the non-observance of safety requirements at sea," he added.

In view of the fishermen's experience, Gordon sought an investigation of the capability of the PCG to implement and enforce maritime safety rules and regulations governing the safe operation of vessels in the sea.

He said the Senate should also look into the possible liability of the mother ship for abandoning the fishermen's boat.

The fishermen's boat, F/BCA Maria Emelyn 2, left Subic Bay towed by their mother boat, FB Guamenia. Along the way, the water became choppy due to bad weather, prompting the fishermen to ask the mother boat to sever the rope linking them.

"After severing the rope, the mother boat then went on its course, leaving the motorized banca on its own which ran out of fuel," Gordon said.

In a parallel development, PCG Commandant Vice Admiral Arthur Gosingan ordered its Subic station to investigate the incidents that led to the ordeal of the four fishermen. The banca's captain was expected to file his marine protest with Coast Guard Subic station commander Felipe Macababad yesterday.

PCG spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo said the agency would also recommend to the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) to require all motorized fishing bancas to be equipped with a GPS.

Marina regulates the operations of all sea and water vessels.

"We will probably ask the Marina to require fishing bancas to have a GPS device on board so in case they get lost, especially in international waters, we could easily rescue them," Balilo said.

He added that all passenger and cargo ships, and most of the larger sea vessels, are equipped with a GPS.

The Subic fishermen who were lost for 20 days possessed a high-frequency radio that allowed them to speak with their employer and with the PCG. However, they were unable to relay their exact location because they did not have a GPS device. They also failed to see any landmarks.

Balilo said the PCG would also look into the administrative liability of the four fishermen's employer.

He said the PCG received information that the Maria Emelyn 2 only had a river and bay permit, which means the banca was not allowed to journey in international waters.

Pfizer withdraws 2 pain relievers on BFAD order

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE BUREAU of Food and Drugs has ordered pharmaceutical giant Pfizer Inc. to "voluntarily withdraw" two popular pain relievers from the local market for fear that they might cause serious skin problems.

Valdecoxib (Bextra) and the injectable Parecoxib (Dynastat) "posed a risk of rare but life-threatening skin reactions," according to the advisory released by BFAD director Leticia Gutierrez.

Pfizer yesterday expressed reservation but said that it was "voluntarily suspending" the sale of Valdecoxib and Parecoxib.

In a statement, the company said the BFAD order was an offshoot of a similar recommendation by the United States Food and Drug Administration.

"As in the US, Pfizer Philippines respectfully disagrees with the BFAD decision," the company said. "But in deference to the agency's views, (we) agree to voluntarily suspend the sales of Valdecoxib and Parecoxib."

But considering the "benefits" of the two drugs, Pfizer said it would "explore options to have both products reintroduced, aligned with the direction being taken by the company globally."

"It still hopes that Valdecoxib and Parecoxib can be made available to physicians and patients who find them as reliable options for the treatment of pain, and intends to explore ways with BFAD under which this could be made possible."

Greenpeace warns against cell phone waste

By Norman Bordadora

KEEPING up with the latest in mobile phones may not exactly be friendly to the environment, Greenpeace warned on Tuesday.

The advocacy group said there are now more than 32 million cellular phones in use in the country and, with an average life span of 18 months, millions of phone units are expected to go into the country's waste stream bringing with it such toxic metals as lead and mercury.

"It's a passion, the need to shift to new and sexier cell phones with new and sexier features," said Von Hernandez, campaigns director for Greenpeace Southeast Asia.

But while he agreed that most consumers used their cellular phones until they were beyond repair, Hernandez said manufacturers must come up with products that are designed for longer use to limit the number of units that are junked.

"(Consumers) have the power to demand that manufacturers design products for longer use and that they should have a take-back (mechanism for their obsolete and worn-out products)," Hernandez said.

With the presence of a backyard recycling and smelting industry in the Philippines, toxic parts and substances that come from discarded cell phones have a great probability of finding their way into the environment.

"These high rates of obsolescence combined with the increasing number of users of both cell phones and personal computers are producing increasing quantities of e-waste, making it the fastest growing component in the waste stream," Hernandez said.

Hernandez said there are more than one million personal computers in the country today and Greenpeace expects more than 1.5 million units will be acquired this year. He said the useful life of a computer currently is three to five years.

"The monitors on televisions and computers alone can contain an average of four pounds of lead as well as other toxics such as chromium, mercury, arsenic, cadmium, selenium, gallium, nickel, cobalt, antimony and brominated flame retardants," Hernandez said.

Dr. Ludwig Kramer of the University of Bremen, a Greenpeace resource person, said waste from the raw materials that go into the manufacture of cell phones add to the problem.

"Did you know that to manufacture (one unit of) Nokia's best phones weighing 180 grams, 75 to 100 kilograms of raw materials are needed," Kramer said.

The rest of the materials, he said, go to waste.

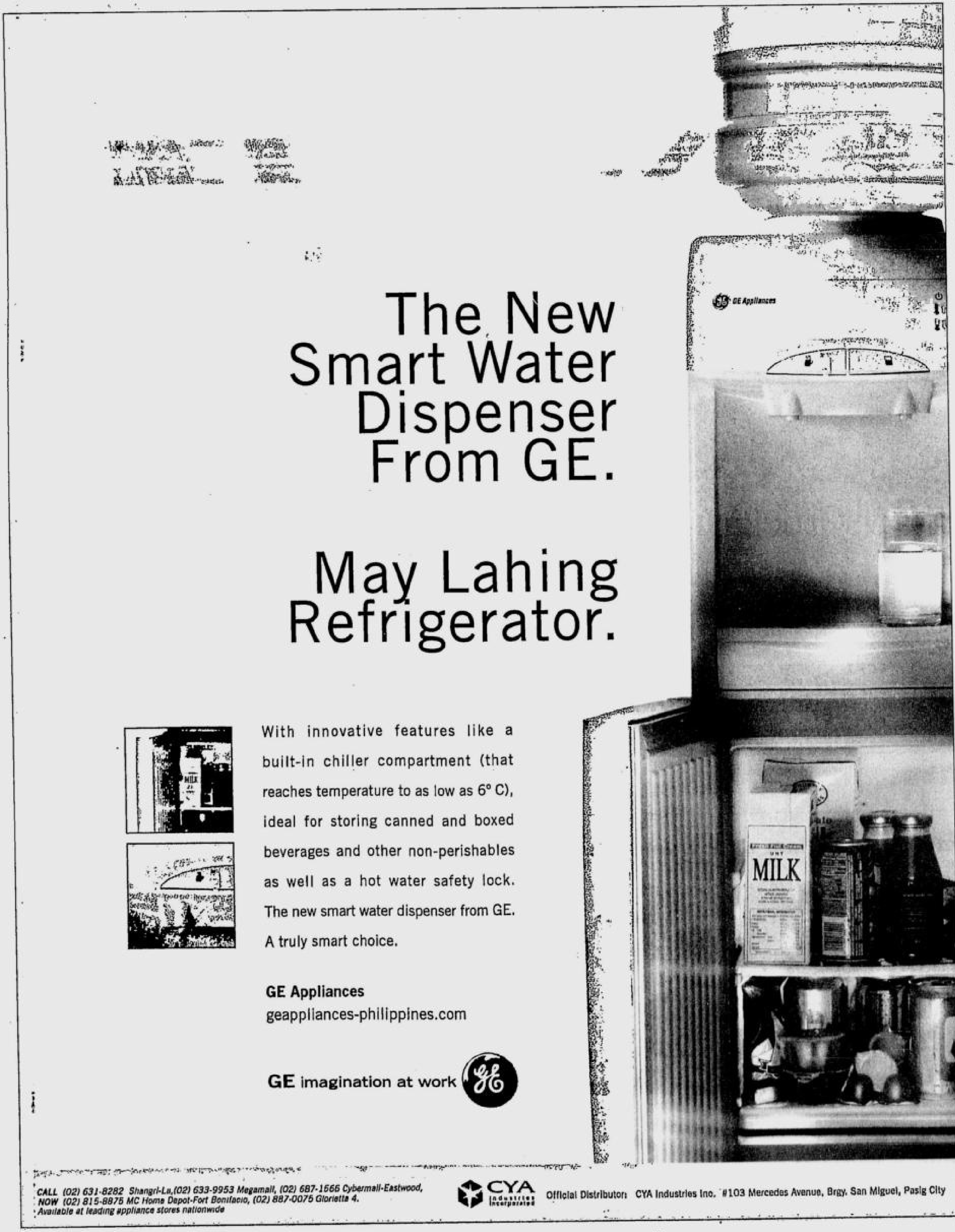
"(Similarly), to manufacture a car weighing a ton, you'd need 50 tons of raw materials," he added.

With the steady influx of new gadgets and the fast turn-over in technology, Greenpeace is pushing for legislation that will introduce extended producer responsibility to complement Republic Act No. 9003, or the Solid Waste Management Act of 2001, and mandate product take-backs for intractable components like batteries and electronics.

"Nokia has a take-back policy (in Europe). I don't see any reason why a similar policy cannot be done in China or in other countries," Kramer said.

China is one of the countries with a Nokia manufacturing plant.

The group believes that such legislation would encourage manufacturers to improve the designs of their products to boost recycling, encourage longer use and eliminate the use of toxic materials and substances.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Correction

IN THE photo of the Kamikaze monument that appeared in the INQUIRER Northern Luzon (Page A19) yesterday, the caption erroneously stated that the structure was found in Bamban, Tarlac. The monument is actually in Mabalacat, Pampanga, and was built by the Mabalacat tourism office.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to Gerry Lirio, city editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City; fax Nos. 897-4793/94; e-mail addresses:glirio@inquirer.com.ph and daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Raul Palabrica, readers' advocate, the same address and fax numbers as those of the city editor, and e-mail address:rpalabrica@inquirer.com.ph.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, April 14, 2005
3rd Week of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 8:26-40
Gospel: John 6:44-51

Jesus said to the crowds, "No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise him up on the last day. It has been written in the Prophets: They shall all be taught by God. So whoever listens and learns from the Father comes to me.

"For no one has seen the Father except the One who comes from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

"I am the bread of life. Though your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, they died. But here you have the bread which comes from heaven so that you may eat of it and not die.

"I am the living bread which has come from heaven; whoever eats of this bread will live forever. The bread I shall give is my flesh and I will give it for the life of the world."

Commentary

The Jews murmur against Jesus. They think they know who he is, who his family members are, which town he comes from but Jesus chides them saying that they do not know him at all. And they cannot come to him, unless drawn by the Father. But to those who come to him, he will raise them up on the last days. Jesus is speaking about his relationship to the Father and what the Father does for him, he in turn will do for all those who believe in him and honor him. He quotes that the day will come when all will be taught by God and that in his person, we can listen and learn from the Father. We must eat of this Word of truth in Jesus, his teaching, his bread and his presence so that we might live. Do we spend our days eating and becoming the Body of Christ with one another?

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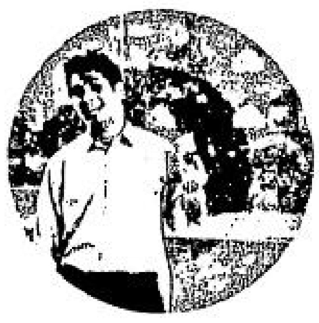

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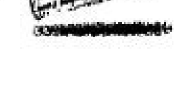

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Ex-Pasig solon shot dead in restaurant

From page A1

Some of the more than a hundred supporters of the former congressman, who gathered in front of the hospital, burst into tears after hearing that Lanot had died.

"He was very kind and helpful. The fight continues," a supporter told reporters.

Police said Lanot was eating lunch with former Caloocan Rep. Romeo Santos in the Jade Palace on Shaw Boulevard at about 1 p.m. when a man entered the restaurant, walked casually toward Lanot, pulled a gun and shot him.

The bullet did not exit Lanot's head.

He was brought to the hospital at about 1:40 p.m. A guard told the INQUIRER that Lanot was pronounced dead at 3:32 p.m.

His wife Zenaida went out of the hospital at 4 p.m. without talking to reporters. Jaworski broke the news to her that Lanot was dead.

Jaworski said he was shocked at the unexpected turn of events. "He was not just a political ally, he was a friend," he said.

Electoral protest at SC

Jaworski said he last saw Lanot at a wedding a few weeks ago. When they would talk, Lanot often spoke about his electoral protest, which he had elevated to the Supreme Court.

"Henry has been talking about this ... He said a decision was near, and that he had high hopes he would eventually sit as mayor," Jaworski told the INQUIRER.

Police remain clueless about the motive of the killing. But Lanot's supporters said it was "politically motivated."

"We can never rule out politics here," Jaworksi said.

Lanot ran for mayor last year but lost to Eusebio by 10,752 votes.

He filed a protest to challenge Eusebio's victory, accusing the mayor of massive vote-buying. He had sought to disqualify Eusebio from running in 2004 allegedly for early campaigning.

"He was the one who really won and not Eusebio," ardent Lanot supporter Milagros, 55, said in between tears.

Eusebio had taken a one-month vacation leave starting last week. He's reportedly abroad.

He designated his son, Councilor Bobby Eusebio, acting mayor.

The younger Eusebio denied allegations of Lanot's supporters that their camp was behind the assassination.

"Making statements like that will just add to the confusion," the younger Eusebio said, adding that he was "shocked" when he learned about the killing.

"We worked with him for a long time in the City Council," he said in a statement.

Lanot served three terms as councilor before being elected congressman in 1998.

The younger Eusebio also expressed condolence to Lanot's family.

"We are willing to help. We will support the Pasig City Police to know what really happened," he added.

After news about Lanot's death spread, his supporters started planning a rally in front of the City Hall.

"Although he is dead, we will bring him to City Hall," a supporter yelled, referring to Lanot.

PNP task force

Hours after Lanot was killed, Arturo Lomibao, director general of the Philippine National Police (PNP), ordered the creation of a task force to investigate the assassination.

The task force will include the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, Crime Laboratory, Intelligence Group and Pasig policemen.

Jaworski said he wanted the investigation taken away from the Pasig police to erase any doubts of "whitewash."

"We do not know the motive. That's why I'm imploring the PNP top brass to look into this matter, to take the investigation out of the Pasig police, and to get the National Bureau of Investigation involved," he said.

At about 6:30 p.m., Lanot's body was brought to the PNP headquarters in Quezon City for autopsy.

His remains will be brought to his house in Rosario, Pasig City.

With a report from Rio Ribaya

Lanot was Eusebio's strongest foe

By Luige A. del Puerto

FORMER Pasig Rep. Henry Lanot was the strongest opponent of Pasig Mayor Vicente "Enteng" Eusebio in the mayoralty race in 2004.

Lanot had Eusebio temporarily disqualified during the elections and almost succeeded in winning the city's top post.

Acting on Lanot's election protest, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) disqualified Eusebio, causing confusion among his supporters on the eve of election day.

The Comelec's decision caught Eusebio flatfooted. But a savvy politician, Eusebio scored a legal victory when Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. ordered the National Capital Region-Comelec to halt the implementation of the Comelec's earlier decision disqualifying him.

Limbo

On Election Day, Eusebio heaved a big sigh of relief as he showed reporters a copy of Abalos' memorandum. "Without this," he said, waving a copy of Abalos' order, "it would have been over for me already."

Eusebio's votes were duly counted, and the ballots showed he had regained his seat. But for a few days, Pasig City remained in limbo as Lanot sought to stop the proclamation of winners.

Eusebio was eventually proclaimed mayor, but Lanot's election protest continued. When the Comelec finally ruled against Lanot, he brought his protest to the high court.

During the campaign and counting, the Lanot and Eusebio camps traded accusations of electioneering and vote padding.

Lanot himself carried a heavy burden as voting day approached. The Supreme Court had just stripped him of his post as Pasig's lone representative.

Real estate magnate Noel "Toti" Cariño, who ran and lost as congressman to Lanot in 2001, had called for a recount, claiming he was the true winner.

Congressman for a day

Three years after, the House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal (HRET) declared Cariño the winner. The Supreme Court affirmed HRET's decision a few days before election day.

Both Cariño and Lanot, however, agreed that the decision was moot and academic.

With just four days to go before Election Day, Cariño was not expected to hold on to his seat.

Cariño, in fact, took his seat in Congress for just one day, probably earning him the title of being the "shortest-serving congressman in history."

He was given a token job during the canvassing.

Cariño's bitter struggle prompted him to say, "The electoral system is rotten, and my case is the proof of it."

He could not help but take a dig at his erstwhile rival, accusing Lanot of using the justice system to "deny the people their true representative."

Cariño said someone had asked him why he still went to Congress to take the "useless oath."

"I said this is what I have been fighting for. This is fighting for justice, for truth. This is upholding a principle, and I'd like to say I stood for that," he said.

PNP insists Esperat murder case solved

From page A1

"We have arrested those behind the killing of Marlene Esperat. Other unresolved cases will be pursued without letup.

We will spare no effort to go after those who dared to inflict harm on journalists. We are determined to keep our country as the bastion of a free and responsible press."

Mastermind suspect named

But Gonzalez yesterday followed through on his Tuesday disclosure and tagged the head of the finance and budget office of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in Central Mindanao as the man behind the killing of Esperat.

"The alleged suspect is a certain Osmeña Montaner of the DA office," Gonzalez told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

He said Montaner's name was mentioned by a "witness" in an "extrajudicial confession" to a Department of Justice prosecutor in Sultan Kudarat.

According to Gonzalez, the DOJ in Manila investigated Montaner after he was charged with multiple murder in connection with the alleged burning of a hotel.

"The case did not prosper one way or the other. That's why I told them to look for the records of the case," he said, adding that one of two state prosecutors assigned to it could have already retired.

Gonzalez reiterated that unlike the witness of the PNP, who supposedly served as a lookout, their witness was the one who had hired the four men earlier arrested by the Central Mindanao police and presented to the media on Tuesday.

"In other words, our witness has better access to the mastermind than the lookout," he said.

'Record time'

Billones said that while PNP investigators had yet to nail the mastermind, they were confident that they had Esperat's assassins in custody.

"We got the murder weapon. We got the killers, and we have confessions," he said.

In a statement, Lomibao said Esperat's murder was solved in "record time" with the arrest of Jerry Cabayag, the alleged gunman; Estanislao Vismanos Jr., Randy Grecia, the alleged lookouts, and Rowie Barua, the soldier who allegedly hired the other three and gave them P120,000.

Grecia earlier surrendered to police and led investigators to his alleged cohorts.

But relatives of Esperat, who asked not to be named for fear of their lives, said there could be truth to Gonzalez's claim.

They said it was Montaner who handled the pork barrel funds of former Rep. Lino O. Montilla, who was among the respondents in a case of electoral fraud that Esperat had helped file against a number of officials in Sultan Kudarat.

They also said Esperat likewise helped expose an alleged overprice of P7,650,000 in the DA's purchase of farm equipment using Montilla's Countrywide Development Fund in 2000.

'Speculative'

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita had this to say on Gonzalez's dispute with the PNP: "Saying that these [four men] are fall guys is speculative. The investigation will show that they admitted [to the crime] and even told us who offered them money to kill Esperat, and how much."

He said Gonzalez should let the PNP do its work first because "the investigation will show the truth."

Ermita appealed for patience from media groups, and said the government was doing its best to address the alarming increase in the number of journalists killed.

"We can't rush things because it might derail the investigation and legal process, and then we might get it wrong. Some cases do not prosper for not following procedure," he said, adding:

"The police are just being careful. We will have a final solution, and not only for cosmetic show-off."

National Bureau of Investigation Director Reynaldo Wycoco had earlier tagged Sumail Sekak, a dismissed DA regional director for Central Mindanao, as the mastermind of Esperat's murder. He also implicated Sekak's wife, Kunesa, who is on leave as director of the social welfare office in Region 12, in the case.

But Sekak yesterday said over radio station dxMS that Wycoco's claim was baseless and "meant to destroy our name."

Sekak, one of several DA officials sued by Esperat for an alleged irregularity in the purchase of fertilizer, also said he did not know the four men earlier arrested by the police.

Describing himself as religious and God-fearing, Sekak said he could not understand why his name and that of his wife surfaced "even in the absence of evidence."

Surprised

He said he was surprised at Wycoco's announcement because no one from the NBI had sought him out.

"I only learned about our supposed involvement [in the Esperat case] in the papers yesterday (Tuesday)," Sekak said, adding that he was not hiding because he had no reason to be.

"Esperat, my former colleague, filed charges against me but these were dismissed by the anti-graft court (Sandiganbayan)," he said.

With reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. in Manila; Edwin O. Fernandez and Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Int'l press watchdog blames 'culture of impunity'

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE FILIPINO "culture of impunity" is the top culprit behind the killing of journalists in the country, according to the French group Reporters Sans Frontieres (Reporters Without Borders, or RSF).

"A lot of people point at the culture of violence [here] as the main reason behind the deaths, but we found out that there is another more important factor," RSF news editor Jean Francois Julliard said yesterday in a press conference.

Julliard said the RSF came to the Philippines to assess the situation and help find solutions for the alarmingly high rate of journalist deaths.

"We found out that in all cases, including the most high-profile ones, there has been no instance where the mastermind was arrested," said Vincent Brossel of the RSF's Bureau Asie-Pacifique.

Julliard said the police had only succeeded in identifying, arresting and charging the killers, but not the actual masterminds: "This indicates a big failure in the investigation."

He said the Philippines was now the second most dangerous country in the world for journalists, next to Iraq.

"The Philippines gained the second spot last year with the election violence and the culture of impunity, especially in far-flung areas where law enforcement is poor," Brossel said.

He added that the freedom of the Philippine press had pushed corrupt officials and landlords to protect their power through violence.

But Julliard also said the RSF had noted some improvements, like the creation of Task Force Newsmen to look into the killings.

"We think there is political will [to stamp out the culture of impunity], but it is only limited to high officials," Brossel said. *With reports from Jeffrey M. Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau; Michael B. Jaucian, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

One bill costs ₱3M in House, ₱8M in Senate

From page A1

better," the study said. Only 7 percent of 10,618 measures filed from the 9th to the 11th Congress was approved.

The study also said about P20 billion was spent in 1987-2001 to finance the operations of the House.

It said the disparity between cost of operations and output was "significant," with 60 percent of the approved measures being local bills that "sail[ed] through the legislative process without debate."

It also said the Senate spent about P6.9 billion for operations from the 9th to the 11th Congress.

Competence doubted

The priorities of the two chambers generally differ, and even the bills tackled by the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (Ledac) take a long time to be passed, the study said.

It cast doubt on the lawmakers' competence and capability, saying the records of deliberations of priority measures indicated that "the majority does not participate and/or has not displayed a depth of understanding of the policy implications" of the subjects for discussion.

In the House, the majority has parochial interests and focuses on local bills and on securing program allocations for constituents, the study said.

"Local constituents still regard their legislators as dispensers of public goods and services—not as lawmakers—and when House members can only bring home laws they authored, they risk losing their seats in the next election," it said.

Thus, the tendency of lawmakers is to vote with the majority or to support Malacañang-certified bills, "without conscious or intensive study, unless particular local interests are affected," it added.

Recommendations

To enhance legislative performance, the committee system should be geared to developing the competence and expertise of the members, the study said.

It called for a continuing education program for lawmakers, designed specifically to enhance knowledge in various disciplines involving policymaking.

It said that while Congress should focus more on priority bills identified by the Ledac and the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan, equal attention should be given to the review of obsolete laws, such as those covering crime, investments, commerce, family and property.

To minimize inter-chamber gridlock, Congress should consider crafting common rules and procedures to ensure the speedy processing of bills, the study said.

It recommended a review of the viability of the unicameral system, the better to pinpoint accountability in policy decisions and the use of public funds.

It also said the House's initiative to form an oversight committee to coordinate legislative policymaking and executive development planning was a step in the right direction.

Political dynasties

The study called for the passage of measures to prevent political dynasties and allow competent and committed people wider access to the legislature.

"A review of the profile of Congress members reveals that both chambers remain in the firm control of the economic and political elite, with at least 50 percent belonging to old political families or surrogates or extensions of these families," it said.

The study observed that an immediate relative usually took the place of an official who had reached the maximum term limit. It said the House roster showed that at least 40 percent of the lawmakers were related to their predecessors.

"A significant factor why limiting the terms of [lawmakers] has not worked to democratize the composition of Congress, especially the House, is the failure to pass an antidynasty law as mandated by the Constitution," the study said, adding:

"Without an antidynasty law that can inhibit members of the same family or immediate relatives from running for the same office successively, term limits will not free elective offices from the control of political families."

Strategic reforms

The study listed other strategic reforms to boost the legislative system:

- Passage of a measure to prevent party-switching to allow the growth of political parties based on their platforms.
- Amendment of provisions of the Election Code to revise existing caps on election spending and rationalize limits for campaign contributions.
- Review of rules to incorporate provisions on the discipline of lawmakers.
- Creation of a mechanism providing for the regular publication of programs and projects funded, as well as public works allocations.
- Amendment of rules to incorporate more stringent requirements for the conduct of legislative inquiries.

Fat cops now leaner, meaner and even sexier

From page A1

months ago all the huffing and puffing have paid off.

They are now leaner and meaner, losing an average of two pounds weekly, according to a statement released yesterday by Abbot Laboratories, the pharmaceutical company which sponsored the project.

They also showed marked improvement in their body mass index, or the measurement of weight in relation to a person's height, the company said.

Wife happy

One police officer who is lighter and feels sexier is SPO3 Ranny Ranada of the Traffic Management Group.

Ranada said he lost 11 pounds and trimmed his waistline by eight inches in just one month.

"My boss is happy about it, my wife is happy about it, I am happy about it," he said.

Instead of a big motorcycle, he now rides a sports bike.

Another officer who shed excess pounds is Senior Insp. Garneth Lim of the Public Information Office. A tight schedule prevented her from finishing the program but she said she lost four pounds in one week.

"Imagine how slimmer I would have been now if I completed the program," she told the INQUIRER. "I now have more discipline in my eating habits. I lessened my intake of carbohydrates and avoid them in the evening whenever I can."

Aerobics, taebo

Started on Feb. 17 by then PNP chief Edgar Aglipay, the program required the participants to attend one-hour aerobic marathon and taebo sessions twice a week.

The physical regimen was on top of a control diet, supervised by experts from Abbott. There was also "pharmacotherapy," a weight reduction medication manufactured by the drug company.

At the start of the program, the police officers were given packets of Reductil (Sibutramine), a drug that Abbot said helps users burn excess fat in three to six months.

The pill makes users feel full even if they eat less.

UN set to pass nuclear treaty

UNITED NATIONS—The 191-member UN General Assembly is expected to approve a nuclear terrorism treaty on Wednesday that would oblige governments to punish those who illegally possess atomic devices or radioactive materials.

The document, the 13th antiterrorism convention and the first completed since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, needs ratification from 22 nations to become international law.

The pact, under negotiation for seven years, will open for signature on Sept. 14 in New York, during a high-level summit.

"Nuclear terrorism is one of the most urgent threats of our time. Even one such attack could inflict mass casualties and change our world forever," UN Secretary General Kofi Annan told the the assembly committee that drafted the treaty.

The accord, called the Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, is meant to stop clandestine networks from using or possessing nuclear weapons.

It obligates governments to prosecute or extradite individuals who possess radioactive materials or nuclear devices or those who threaten others while possessing such materials. The text also calls for exchanges of information and assistance among governments.

Russia introduced the treaty in 1998 to keep "loose nukes" from falling into the hands of terrorist groups. At the time, Alexander Lebed, the former national security chief, said Moscow could not account for about 100 suitcase-sized nuclear weapons.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has reported an increase in incidents involving illicit trafficking of nuclear or other radioactive material: 650 confirmed cases since 1993, with with nearly 100 of them last year alone.

A text of the treaty was approved earlier this month by the assembly's legal committee after four nations decided to withdraw so-called "killer" amendments.

Pakistan had wanted the treaty to apply to nuclear threats by governments. Cuba proposed that it cover government armed forces. The United States had wanted to add language stating that the peaceful use of nuclear materials should not be used as a cover for weapons development, and Iran had sought amendments endorsing the free exchange of nuclear equipment and materials for peaceful purposes. *Reuters*

Vatican opens crypt to pilgrims

VATICAN CITY—The Vatican opened Saint Peter's crypt Wednesday for thousands of pilgrims to pay their last respects at the tomb of Pope John Paul II, as Italian media reported growing support for German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as a possible successor.

Several hundred people lined up before dawn, many of them bringing written messages for the late Pope, to be allowed into the bowels of St. Peter's Basilica for a brief moment in front the simple marble slab marking the Pontiff's burial place.

"I want to beg him for help, because I believe he is still alive," Father Leszek from the Pope's native Poland said as he stood in the queue.

Once in the vaulted room, many knelt in prayer, while others stood quietly, tears trickling down their faces.

"It is really emotional," said Graziella Valmori, a French woman who was first in line after arriving at 4:15 a.m., close to three hours before the crypt opened at 7 a.m.

Valmori succeeded in getting one of the ushers to let her necklace bearing a small wooden cross touch the slab.

Another pilgrim said she could feel the Pope's presence.

"It's as if he is still alive. It's as if he is there," said Maria Pazienza Salaris of Sardinia as she left the crypt.

One Italian woman brought a message cut out in the shape of a heart.

"Thank you for having invited us to this celebration," read the message of the woman who wished to be identified as "Tota Tua." The Pope had repeatedly used the term "Totus Tuus" (all yours) to underline his complete devotion to the Virgin Mary.

Another brought a picture of herself with the Pope taken some years ago. The Church's cardinals, in Rome for the Pope's funeral and to elect a new pope, paid their respects at the tomb on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, the high prelates gathered for their ninth meeting to discuss the status and future of the 1.1 billion strong Church as Italian newspapers reported that Ratzinger was emerging as a frontrunner to succeed John Paul II.

Ratzinger, a close confidant of the Polish-born Pope, headed the powerful Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith until the Pope's death, marking the Vatican's doctrine with John Paul II's conservative stamp.

Italy's La Repubblica daily said Ratzinger could already count on at least 40, if not 50 votes, of the 115 cardinal electors.

Ratzinger is seen as a possible "transition" pope since, aged 78, he is one of the oldest candidates.

La Repubblica reported that the German cardinal has the support of several Latin American cardinals, as well as two powerful Italians, Cardinals Camillo Ruini and Angelo Sodano, both intent of scuttling the chances of fellow Italian Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, who is seen as a strong candidate. *AFP*

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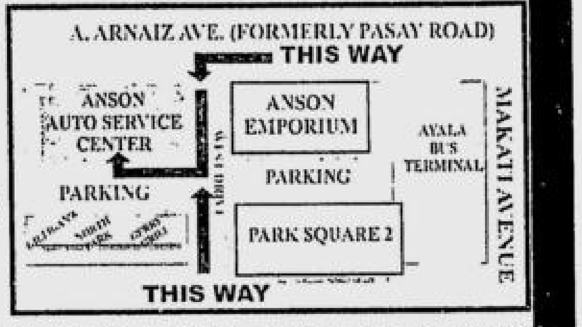

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Scientists race against time to destroy deadly flu virus

GENEVA—The World Health Organization issued a global alert on Wednesday after a US institute accidentally distributed to labs samples of lethal flu virus that slew up to four million people in the late 1950s.

"There's a slim but a real risk that this could spark a pandemic," Maria Cheng, a spokesperson for the UN's health agency, said, explaining that many people around the world would have no protection if the virus were released.

The virus, known as H2N2, killed between one and four million people worldwide during the Asian influenza pandemic of 1957-58 before disappearing in 1968.

"As far as pandemics go, it (the event in 1957-8) was relatively mild. But if this were to recur it would have significant consequences for the public health system," Cheng said.

Security experts have also feared that a resurgence of ancient or stored viruses such as smallpox or past flu strains could be used by bioterrorists.

The H2N2 virus samples were distributed by the US-based College of American Pathologists (CAP) to the laboratories, mainly in North America, in October 2004.

But the incident was detected by a Canadian laboratory only last month.

The WHO warned in a statement that people born after 1968 were expected to have no or only limited immunity to the strain, which is not contained in current influenza vaccines.

"As a precautionary measure, WHO is recommending that all samples of the proficiency testing panel from CAP and other proficiency testing providers containing H2N2 and any derivates be destroyed immediately," the agency said.

The US government on April 8 asked the College to instruct 3,747 laboratories that received samples containing the H2N2 virus to destroy them, the WHO said.

A second message sent on April 12 "further requested that destruction of the H2N2 virus be confirmed and that any case of respiratory disease among laboratory workers be investigated and notified to national authorities," it added. *AFP*

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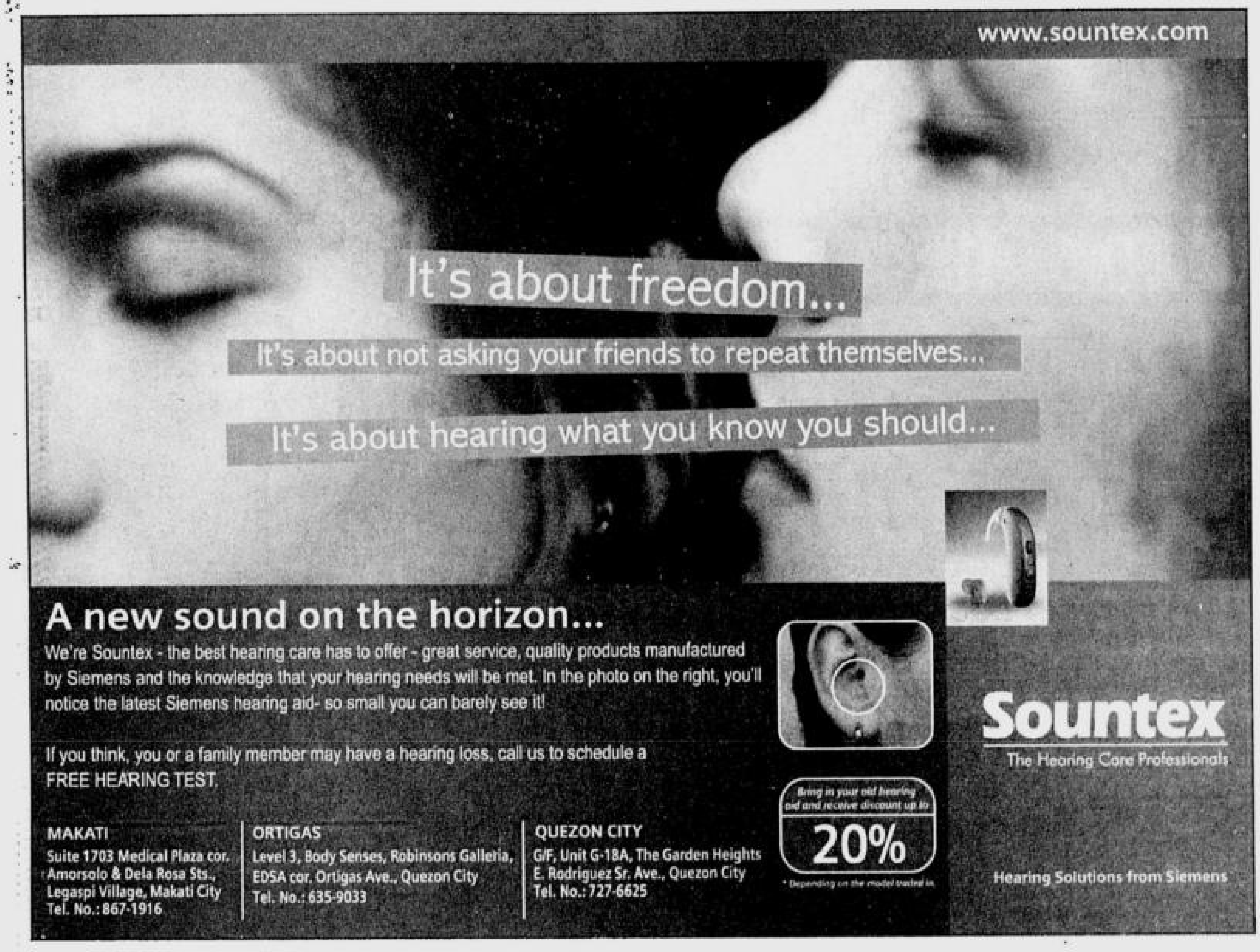
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Jackson offered house, says accuser's stepdad

SANTA MARIA, California—The stepfather of Michael Jackson's accuser testified that after the broadcast of a damaging TV documentary about Jackson, an associate of the pop star offered the family a college education and a house.

But the stepfather said when he sought money for the family, he was accused of blackmail.

The stepfather took the stand Tuesday as the prosecution shifted from witnesses who alleged past improprieties by Jackson back to the current allegations that the singer molested a 13-year-old boy in February or March 2003, gave him alcohol and conspired to hold his family captive to get them to rebut the documentary.

In the Feb. 6, 2003, documentary, "Living With Michael Jackson," Jackson and the boy appeared on camera, and Jackson said he let children sleep in his bed but characterized it as innocent.

Part of the stepfather's testimony dealt with the period leading up to Feb. 19-20, 2003, when the boy, his brother, sister and mother made a rebuttal video in which they praised Jackson.

The stepfather testified he began asking Jackson associate Frank Tyson what monetary compensation there was for the family if they participated in the rebuttal video. Tyson has been named by prosecutors as an unindicted co-conspirator in Jackson's case.

"I said, 'What are you offering this family to do this?'" the stepfather said. He quoted Tyson as replying, "We're offering protection.'"

The stepfather continued, "I said, 'Frank, the family doesn't need protection. Who are you protecting them from?'"

He said he never got an answer.

As the conversation continued, the witness said, Tyson "said he was going to offer a college education and a house." The stepfather said he told Tyson the family did not need a house or college, and asked, "What are you offering them monetarily?"

At that point, the witness said, Tyson replied, "Are you trying to blackmail us?"

The stepfather said he had no idea there was any information that could be used for blackmail. He also said he received "zero" money from Jackson.

The stepfather described a tumultuous time in February 2003 when the mother and children were whisked off to Florida, purportedly to hold a news conference with Jackson, returned and taken to Neverland, then brought back to Los Angeles.

During that period, he said they gave an audio interview to a private investigator, filmed the rebuttal video and were interviewed by child welfare authorities.

Prosecutors allege the molestation occurred near the end of the family's purported captivity.

"And in the middle of all this turmoil, to your knowledge, molestation began on the 20th (of February)?" Jackson attorney Thomas Mesereau Jr. asked incredulously. The judge sustained an objection and the question was not answered. *AP*

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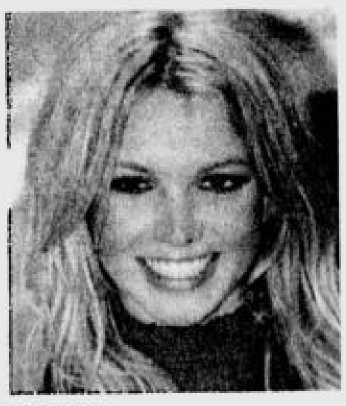
Britney Spears says she's pregnant

LOS ANGELES—Britney Spears announced on Tuesday that she was pregnant with her first child, ending months of speculation over whether the pop princess was launching a new career as a mother.


SPEARS

Spears, 23, who married dancer Kevin Federline last September in a surprise, private ceremony, made the announcement in a posting to fans on her official website.

"The time has finally come to share our wonderful news that we are expecting our first child together. There were reports that I was in the hospital this weekend. Kevin and I just want everyone to know that all is well. Thank you for your thoughts and prayers. Love Britney and Kevin," the brief posting said.

No further details were available. The child will be a first for Spears but a third for Federline, who has two young children by his former girlfriend, actress Shar Jackson.

Spears has made no secret of her desire to become a young mother, writing on her website last October that she "can't wait to start a family."

Shortly after her wedding to Federline, she announced she was taking a few months off to "just chill" and enjoy married life with her new husband.

But that did not stop celebrity magazines and paparazzi photographers from following her every move, snapping her on the beach and shopping in maternity stores. Some reported that the marriage was already on the rocks.

Spears and Federline were married only eight months after Spears wed a former high school sweetheart in Las Vegas in a spur of the moment arrangement that was quickly annulled.

Spears became a world-wide pop phenomenon in the late 1990s when she shot to fame at the age of 15 with her 1999 debut "Baby One More Time." *Reuters*

Japan defies China, drills for oil in disputed waters

TOKYO—Japan said Wednesday it would allow its firms to explore for gas and oil in waters disputed with China amid rising diplomatic tensions between the two nations hungry for energy resources and torn by their shared past.

Japan gave the go-ahead just days after violent anti-Japanese protests in China and despite a warning by Beijing earlier this month that such a move "will further escalate the situation."

China began drilling in 2003 at the disputed site in the East China Sea, which a 1999 Japanese survey estimated had a massive 200 billion cubic meters of gas.

Japan's ministry of economy, trade and industry said in a statement it would begin reviewing applications from companies which want to explore the Japanese exclusive economic zone of the fields—a delineation not recognized by China.

"It is a process. We will press forward accordingly," Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi told reporters.

Asked if the move could further worsen relations with China, Koizumi said: "This is a separate matter."

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda told a separate news conference: "We have long discussed the exploration rights and already informed (China) about that. Now the time is ripe."

The Japanese decision will raise the stakes for a meeting Sunday in Beijing between Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura and his counterpart Li Zhaoxing about their nations' troubled relationship.

Japan and China are two of the world's biggest energy importers and have seen their relations persistently worsen. In November Japan sent a formal protest after it spotted a Chinese nuclear submarine in the area of the gas fields and chased it for two days across the ocean.

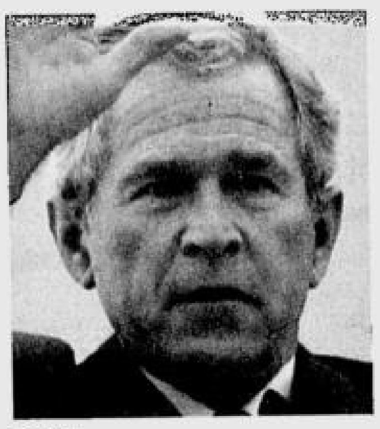
Ties have become even more tense in the past week as thousands of Chinese took part in rowdy weekend protests against Japan, pelting its embassy with bottles and cans and urging a boycott of Japanese goods.

The demonstrations were called after Japan approved a nationalist-written textbook which allegedly whitewashes its bloody wartime occupation of its Asian neighbors including China.

Japan and China have summoned each other's ambassadors and demanded an apology. Tokyo wants compensation for the protests and Beijing believes Tokyo must do more to atone for its militarist past.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, speaking Tuesday in India, targeted Japan's cherished goal of a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, saying Tokyo needed to face up to its history before being admitted. *AFP*

Bush: Iraq may herald global democratic revolt


BUSH

FORT HOOD, Texas—US President George W. Bush on Tuesday ranked Saddam Hussein's ouster from power with the fall of the Berlin Wall and said changes in Iraq may herald a "global democratic revolution."

In a speech to US soldiers on the sprawling Fort Hood military base, Bush declared: "As the Iraq democracy succeeds, that success is sending a message from Beirut to Tehran that freedom can be the future of every nation."

"The establishment of a free Iraq at the heart of the Middle East will be a crushing defeat to the forces of tyranny and terror, and a watershed event in the global democratic revolution," the president said.

Bush stopped short of setting a deadline for withdrawing the roughly 140,000 US troops in Iraq, but said that the day they will leave has drawn closer as the number of trained Iraqi security forces has grown.

"Iraq security forces are becoming more self-reliant and taking on greater responsibilities. And that means that America and its coalition partners are increasingly playing more of a supporting role," he said.

"Today, more than 150,000 Iraqi security forces have been trained and equipped, and for the first time, the Iraqi army, police and security forces now outnumber US forces in Iraq."

The president, who was on his way from his Texas ranch to Washington, was to have lunch with soldiers and meet with relatives of US troops killed in Iraq.

Fort Hood, one of the largest US military bases, is home to the 1st Cavalry Division and the 4th Infantry Division.

Bush, wearing a military-style jacket, opened his speech with a somewhat timid version of the traditional US Army "Hoo-ah" cheer, which was echoed by the roughly 25,000 soldiers on hand.

Some 1,550 US soldiers have been killed in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion, and efforts to rebuild the country and set it on track for democracy have battled a violent insurgency and terrorist attacks.

"The Iraqi people know the sacrifices you are making. They're grateful to you. They are grateful to your families," he said.

"You are making possible the peace of Iraq, and you are making possible the security of free nations. Yours is noble work, it's important work, and I thank you for assuming your duty," said the president.

"This weekend we marked the two-year anniversary of the liberation of Baghdad," he said. "The toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad will be recorded, alongside the fall of the Berlin Wall, as one of the great moments in the history of liberty."

"From the beginning, our goal in Iraq has been to promote Iraqi independence," said Bush, whose central case for war was that Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction and could pass them to terrorists.

No such weapons have been found, an official commission called the pre-war intelligence "dead wrong," and Bush has shifted his argument to the campaign to make Iraq a democratic model for the Middle East.

"We will help you build a peaceful and representative government that protects the rights of all citizens. And then our military forces will leave," he said. *AFP*

US indicts 3 Brits in terrorism plot

WASHINGTON—US authorities Tuesday revealed terrorism charges against three Britons whose arrest in Britain on similar charges followed heightened security last year at major financial institutions in US cities.

Dhiren Barot, 33, Nadeem Tarmohammed, 26, and Qaisar Shaffi, also 26, are charged with conspiring to use a weapon of mass destruction, conspiring to aid terrorists, aiding terrorists and conspiring to damage or destroy commercial buildings, according to the March 23 indictment in US District Court in New York unsealed Tuesday.

All three face life in prison if convicted. White House press secretary Scott McClellan told reporters President George W. Bush was pleased by the indictments.

"We're going to continue to go after and pursue those who seek to do us harm and those who seek to do harm to the civilized world. This is another significant step in the global war on terrorism," McClellan said.

The three are detained in Britain on charges they plotted attacks with radioactive or chemical weapons and are not expected to stand trial until later this year. US authorities said they would seek their extradition after their trials.

"Today's indictment sends a message of our resolve to terrorists," Deputy US Attorney General James Comey said.

The alleged plot to bomb the World Bank and International Monetary Fund headquarters in Washington, the New York Stock Exchange and Citigroup headquarters in Manhattan, and the offices of Prudential Financial in Newark, New Jersey, was first revealed Aug. 1. *AFP*

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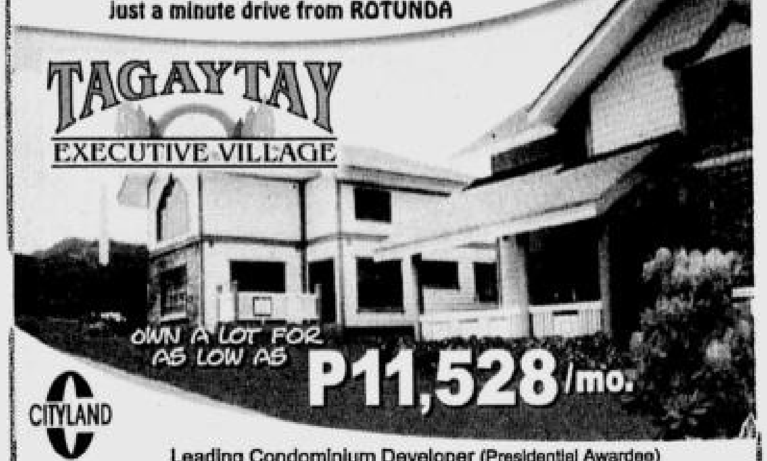

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WALANG KARTEL SA OIL INDUSTRY

The Oil Companies are being publicly crucified and unfairly accused of CARTELIZATION.

Ano ang ibig sabihin ng CARTEL?

Cartel is defined as "a collusion of companies to control profit or eliminate competition". To bolster this allegation, it is cited that the oil companies:

a. increase prices at about the same time, and

b. when made, the amounts are about the same.

Ang pagtaas ng *international prices* ng langis ay hindi maikakaila. Alam ito ng lahat; at ipinapahayag at pinag-uusapan sa media. This situation is not within the control of the local oil companies, neither is it to their advantage.

Simula noong Disyembre 2004 hanggang Abril 7, 2005, ang itinaas ng *international price* sa Diesel ay 42%, samantalang ang itinaas naman ng local oil companies ay 15% lamang!

Sumunod ang industriya ng langis sa suggestion ng Department of Energy (DoE) na magtaas lamang ng maliliit na halaga linggo-linggo para sa kapakanan ng ating mga mamamayan. Dahil dito, halos sabay-sabay ang naging pagtaas.

Ang totoo, nakasama pa nga ito sa industriya, dahil sa maliit na pagtaas ng halaga, hindi na nakahabol ang mga kumpanya ng langis sa lubhang napakabilis na pagtaas ng *international market price.*

Ang resulta ay lumaki ang *under recovery* sa Diesel, at umabot na sa P4.54 per liter ang kinailangang habulin. Ang halagang ito ay open record at malayang masusuri nino man.

To ensure viability, each company must recover its costs. And in determining price increases, decisions must be considered in the light of the prevailing market competition. Thus, we see a "convergence of pricing." You cannot price too high lest no one buys, nor too low lest you lose viability and probably run out of stock. This is why market prices tend to be uniform.

Pag nagpunta ka sa palengke, halos pare-pareho ang presyo ng isda, gulay, manok at karne. May kartel ba doon?

Kung may CARTEL, why do the local oil companies allow an under recovery situation?

Ang PETRON, ang pinakamalaking oil company sa bansa, ay may *gross margin* na halos 11% on sales *before deregulation*. Ito ay naging 8.25% na lamang *after deregulation*, o bumagsak ng 25%. Ito ay dahil hindi nila maitaas ang presyo sa gusto nila dahil sa matinding *competition*, at sa pangangambang mabawasan o bumaba ang kanilang *market* share.

Pinakamababa pa rin ang presyo ng langis sa Pilipinas sa Asia maliban sa Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia where fuel is heavily subsidized by the government.

Ang presyo ng DIESEL dito sa atin ay P26.56 per liter samantalang P52.27 ito sa Hong Kong at P46.78 naman sa South Korea.

We, the Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association (IPPCA), are optimistic that the spiraling of world oil prices will very soon lose momentum and abate. At that time, we hope to fully recover our viability, and be able to roll back prices. This we pray for the economic welfare of our nation. Meantime, we simply have to survive to be able to continue our role of fiscalizing the industry thru free and open competition for the ultimate benefit of the Filipino consumer.

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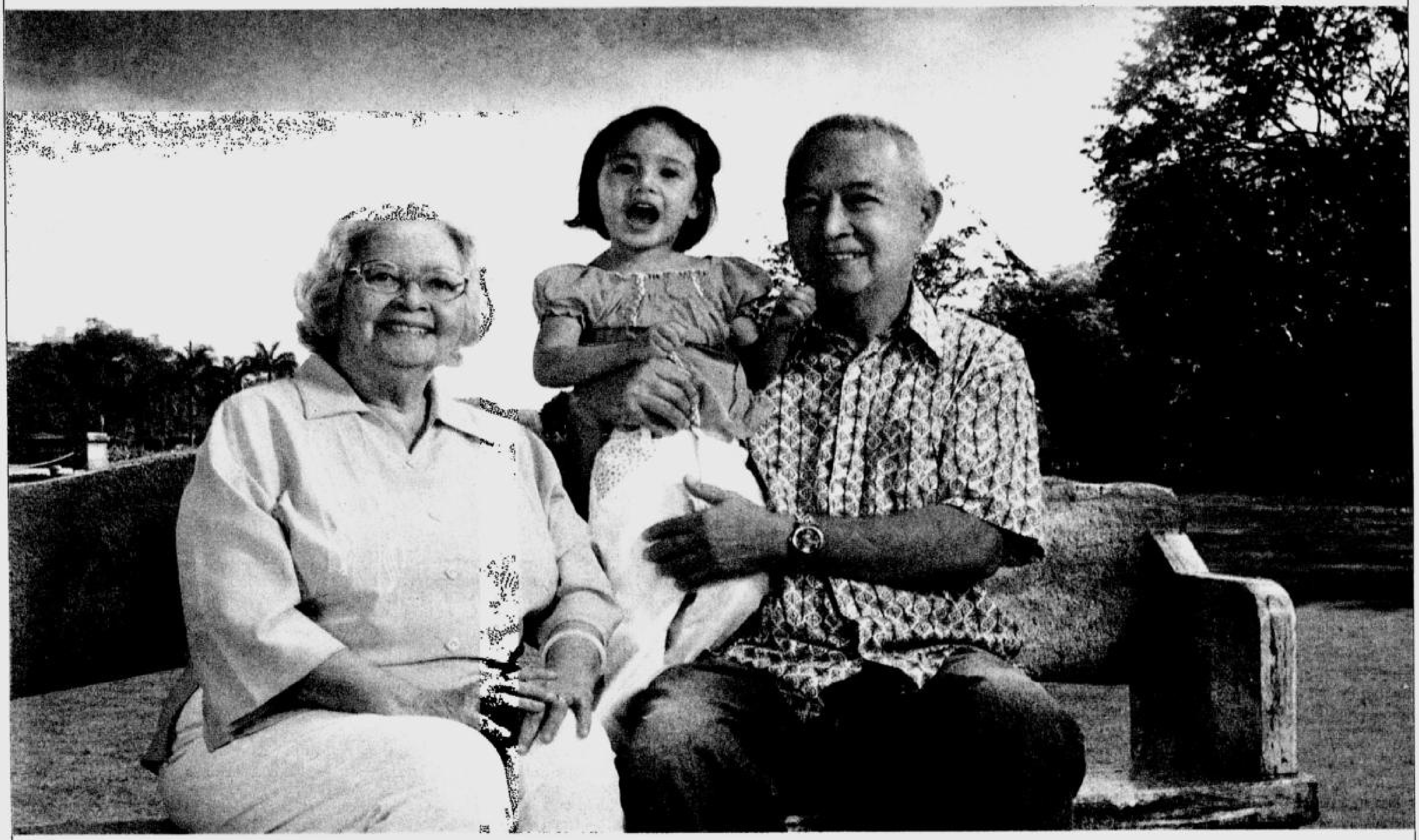

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OPINION

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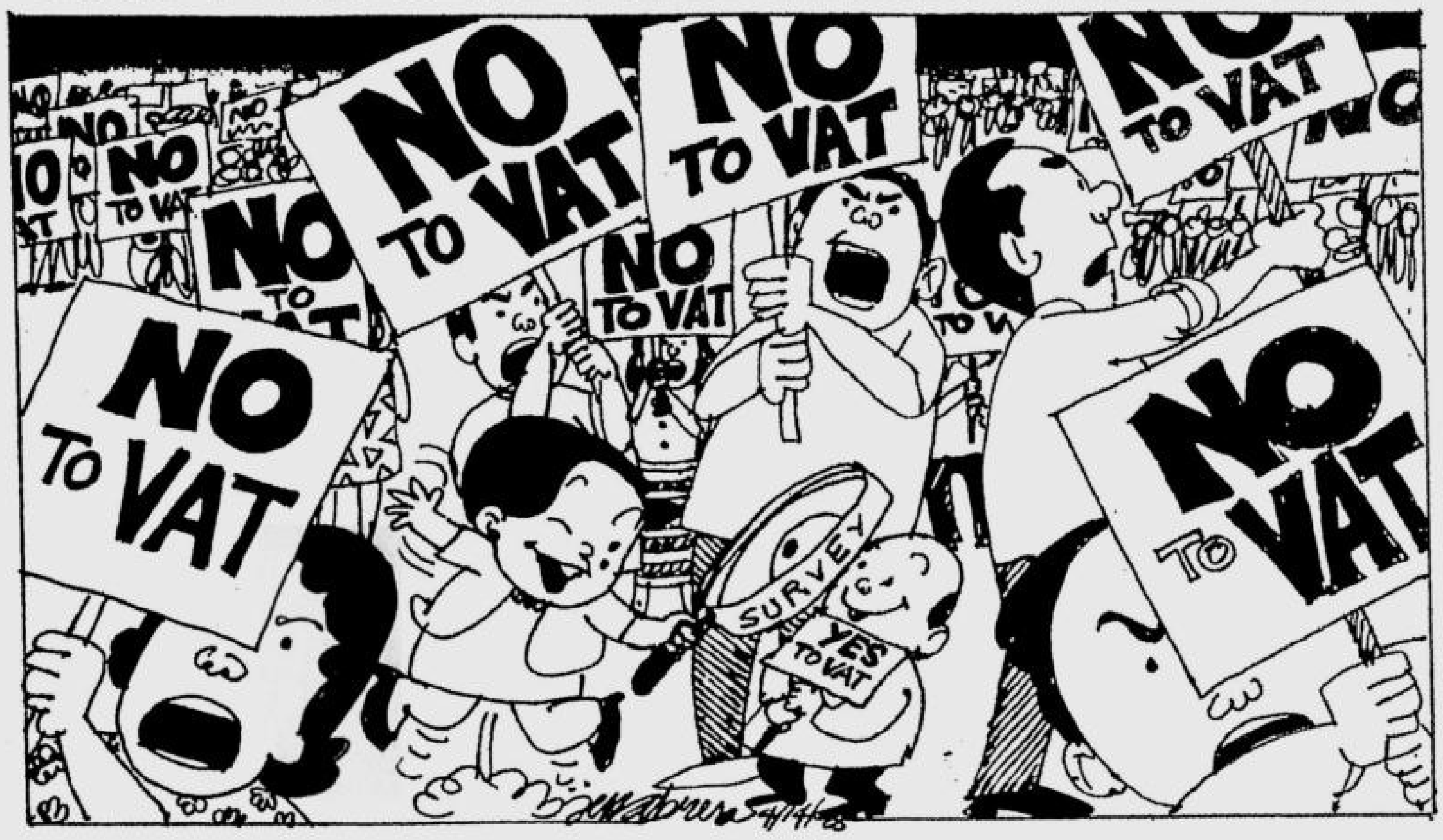


Media murders

EDITORIAL

IF IT is eventually proved true, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez's disclosure—that there is an entirely different set of people behind the assassination of crusading journalist Marlene Esperat—will once more put in question the capability of authorities to get to the bottom of media murders in the Philippines. Even as the police in Central Mindanao were announcing that the Esperat case was deemed closed with the arrest of four men, another journalist, broadcaster Alberto Martinez, was shot in the back while he was heading home in Kabacan, North Cotabato. Martinez thankfully survived, but the very fact that the ambush was pulled off—despite the heat generated by the much touted Task Force Newsmen—warns of more terrible things to come.

Apart from insisting on its position, the Philippine National Police should make haste to clarify things vis-à-vis the justice secretary's disclosure, which, at the very least, suggests that the PNP has been less than diligent and stringent in the conduct of its work. At this time when public confidence in the government continues to ebb, it will not do for state agencies to keep on issuing conflicting statements, particularly if these pertain to murder suspects. Whom, after all, will the public, let alone Esperat's bereaved family, believe?

It does not help any that the PNP and the National Bureau of Investigation appear less than friendly. To NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco's earlier naming of an agriculture official as the mastermind of Esperat's murder, PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao declared that the bureau was not part of the inquiry into the case. Perhaps this was Lomibao's way of telling the NBI to lay off and butt out. Apparently, another case of "a quarrel over turf"—a festering problem if there ever was one.

Indeed, whom will the public believe? Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes described the four men trotted out to the media on Tuesday in Camp Crame as Esperat's "executioners." (But he has yet to announce the mastermind of the crime committed last Maundy Thursday in broad daylight, in Esperat's very home, in front of her children.) Gonzalez said his new suspect, another agriculture official, was hired by "somebody else" and recruited the four supposed killers. But Supt. Danilo Galapon said they were "surprised" to hear a confession from the alleged gunman. And Gonzalez said Wycoco should "look deeper into the case."

Who's going to straighten this out? And when? (We haven't really refocused our attention on what a military intelligence officer once alleged: that evidence purportedly seized from suspected terrorists—for example, materials for making explosives—was being "recycled.")

More often than not, presentations of arrested persons to the media—what William Safire once famously termed "the perp walk"—have raised more questions than answers; not to mention the pointed observations that these cannot be done in civilized countries without a barrage of lawsuits against the state. But from the way these things play out in these parts, authorities seem to think that dressing suspects in prison T-shirts and presenting them to TV cameramen and photographers are the closest thing to the solution of a case. Inday Espina-Varona of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines cannot be faulted for stressing what should in fact go without saying: that a case can be considered closed only with the conviction of the masterminds and their co-conspirators.

To continue to train the spotlight on the killing of journalists—this remains one of the fundamental tasks of the Philippine media. More than ever, the need to be unflinching in the coverage of an issue that is now the subject of concern of journalists' groups worldwide is paramount. That the practice of journalism is now fraught with peril has been sufficiently demonstrated, and nothing short of concerted vigilance is required to stem the tide.

But no matter the immediate danger, it is not only the threat of physical extinction that should be the target of fierce resistance. State indifference, the slow erosion of democratic space—these are the shadowy enemies we must recognize and address if Filipino journalists are to achieve true justice for those felled and save those now fixed in the cross hairs.

Premature obituary

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

THE FAREWELL party for journalists had shifted into high gear. Vodka replaced *airag*, the Mongolian drink from fermented mare's milk. "Don't fret," our soused guide chortled. "I'll get you to the airport on time."

At seven sharp, the next morning, he appeared at our *ger*, Mongolia's traditional tent. Hangover was etched all over his face. But his logic remained impeccable.

Waving aside my expired international driver's license, he mumbled: "You drive with a lapsed permit and we'll make Buyant-Ukhas airport on time. Or I drive with a valid license and we'll end in Tuul river. You can kiss your Beijing flight goodbye then. Choose." Quickly, I grabbed the offered car key.

Soon, we pulled into Mongolia's highway, slicing through steppes and pastures. In the clear morning air, as Barbra Streisand sang, "On A Clear Day (You Can See Forever)."

Mongolia is one of the world's sparsely populated nations. Density is four persons per square mile. Compare that to 704 Filipinos crammed within the same area. There are 13 heads of horses, camels, yaks or sheep for every Mongolian.

But awareness of ecological limits is growing. A three-year period saw 788 fires incinerate 26.2 million hectares of forests. Herdsmen's carelessness sparked most conflagrations.

Forest fires have blistered this region. East Kalimantan is "the lung of Southeast Asia." Smoke and haze—dubbed "smaze" by meteorologists—from 167 uncontrolled blazes there drifted across Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, even General Santos and Palawan in 1997. "Smaze" is part of our post-Chernobyl vocabulary.

"Haze-from-blaze" jitters, the Asian Development Bank noted, rippled through Asean in 2000. Satellites then photographed 181 new fires: 31 in Kalimantan; the rest in Sumatra. The end-of-the-century conflagration cost over $9 billion, the UN Environment Programme estimated.

But fires are just one aspect of the unsustainable drain on forests. Commercial loggers, (many in cahoots with corrupt officials) slash-and-burn farmers, plus spreading cities, rack up the losses. "Asphalt is often the last harvest for many forests," the late National Scientist Dioscoro Umali once said.

Asia's richer countries, like Japan, Australia or New Zealand, have conserved their forests. But "in the tropical forests of Asia, deforestation amounted to 3.9 million hectares per year," the Asia-Pacific Forestry Towards 2010 noted. "Commercial harvesting (of trees) has been more widespread in tropical Asia and the Pacific, than in any other tropical region."

Causes for the slide are well-documented: exclusion of local communities, over-exploitation of forests for commercial gain, land hunger, and expanding populations. "The day when you burned a hectare of trees to raise 600 kilos of rice is over," said the late YS Rao, one of Asia's more perceptive Asian foresters.

One result has been a surfeit, some claim, of "horror stories of wanton logging, purposely-set forest fires and exchange of envelopes, stuffed with cash in dark and smoke-filled rooms."

So is Dante's prescription inevitable for Asia's forests? *Lasciate ogni speranza ch' voi entrate* ("Abandon all hope, you who enter here")?

"No. There's hope for forests where new ideas are allowed to flourish," says Nature Conservancy's Nigel Sizer. "Stunning examples of innovation, leadership and success"...are shown in the new 404-page study, just published by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization: "In Search of Excellence: Exemplary Forest Management in Asia and the Pacific."

Sifted from 172 reports in 21 countries, the book's 28 case studies include Indonesia's Damar gardens (where indigenous Krui people developed sustainable and lucrative management of forests), the Periyar Tiger Reserve in Kerala, India (where convicted strippers of cinnamon bark turned into biodiversity stewards) and Vietnam's Can Gio mangrove forests, rehabilitated from herbicides and bombing damage.

"Predictions of the imminent demise of the region's forests may be premature," says FAO senior regional forestry officer Patrick Durst who was co-author and editor. This book "shatters the myth that there's no positive forestry being practiced in our region...There are also good news stories in the region. They've just not been told."

The Philippines features in four of the book's 28 examples: (a) the Makiling Forest Reserve; (b) The Ifugao Muyong: (c) "Forest from the Mud: the Kalibo Experience"; and (d) the Kalahan Reserve that straddles Nueva Vizcaya and Pangasinan.

In later columns, we hope to detail these successes. For now, we note that the once severely denuded Mount Makiling is one of the country's important biodiversity areas and forested watersheds. Citizens working with UP's Makiling Center for Mountain Ecosystems made Makiling a "restored forest."

Muyongs are "patches of forests, enclosing or adjacent to Ifugao in the Mountain Province. Time-tested, these woodlots yield rich harvests of forest products and protect lower farmland from runoff and erosion."

The Kalibo Save the Mangroves Association turned a bare mudflat into a mangrove ecotourism zone, with sharply reduced incidents of illegal cutting. And the Kalahan Forest Reserve in Nueva Vizcaya emerged as a model for community-based forest management, and for reducing threats to ancestral lands.

"People are recognizing that where governments, communities, industry and environmentalists work together, results are most constructive," FAO Assistant Director General He Changchui notes. "There has been a gradual shift in the forest debate."

* * *

E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph

Tragedy, farce

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

ONLY last year, I read a fine piece about Nora Aunor, which went on to win first prize in the English Essay of the Palanca Awards.

It was about someone who lived in a slum in Manila who was an out-and-out Noranian. She had various memorabilia of Nora Aunor neatly tucked in albums or hanging in frames on all four walls of her tiny place. They dated back from when Nora first caught the notice of the country, during her amateur singing days, and went all the way to her most recent appearances, which was some years ago.

The Noranian knew pretty much all there was to know about Nora. She was a walking encyclopedia of trivia about her. She took exceptional pride in pictures that showed her beaming beside her idol. Apparently, the superstar, upon hearing about her curious passion, had graced her abode with a visit, and the photographs were there to confirm the event. It was the highest point in her life. Her idol herself had appeared in a movie not unlike the one she was living—a movie called "Bona," in which Nora's character, who worships a movie star, is spurned by her in the end. Fortunately for her, life did not imitate art.

I have not followed Nora Aunor's career meticulously, but I am one of those who have admired her for her accomplishments. Her rise from rags to riches, which has been a source of inspiration for the teeming millions like her—she used to sell cold water in one of the train stations along the Bicol route before basking in glory through her golden voice—has been well documented and passed on to legend. I myself was impressed by her transition from singing sensation doing bubble-gum movies to formidable actress, which she essayed in a string of important movies in the 1970s, particularly those written by Ricky Lee.

I remember that Lino Brocka once spoke glowingly of her. She was one of two actresses, he said, who could be roused from sleep and emote instantly before the cameras. The other was Gina Alajar.

That is the reason I am monumentally ambivalent about Aunor's plight in the United States today. Like other Filipinos who have expressed sympathy and support for her—some members of the show-biz community have even tried to raise funds for her legal fees—I too vastly commiserate with her. I can imagine the dismay of her fans, many of them remaining fiercely loyal to this day. At the very least, she is a compatriot: I feel the same way about the overseas workers who land in jail after being accused of a crime, lonely and desperate in a strange land. At the very most, she is someone who has done much to improve people's lives, particularly the down-and-out, with the inspiration her life has been to them.

But this is the point at which I diverge with the common opinion, at least as I've read about it in the newspapers. I do feel she deserves to be given the best legal defense possible, and I do feel she deserves to be given ample support by government representatives in the United States. She is a taxpayer, and has probably paid more taxes than most of the richest businessmen in this country. But I do feel as well that some criticism about her behavior abroad is in order.

I have heard people say that we should not rush to judgment, she is innocent until proven guilty. True, and that is for the courts to determine. But we may not be devoid of common sense either, and rush to a state of see-no-evil, hear-no-evil. I do not particularly like airport personnel as a rule, and US ones in particular, particularly after 9/11. They can be brusque, they can be hostile. But they cannot, and do not, plant things in people's bags. Aunor was found to possess shabu in her hand-carried bag. We may safely assume it was not put there by airport authorities.

Is it possible somebody else slipped it into Aunor's bag, as her supporters claim? Well, anything is possible in this world, but this is a longer shot than Bona had with being treated well by her idol. A possibility that plunges to record lows given that Aunor has been known to indulge in the stuff in past years.

I do feel the deepest sympathy for her, but I do feel as well the deepest respect for the American justice system. It is impersonal, it is stern, but that is what justice is supposed to be. The blindfold in Lady Justice's eyes means precisely that: She is blind to color and race, to high and low, to beauty and beast. Of course, in this country, the blindfold means that the Lady is blind to right and wrong, to good and evil, to lie and truth, but that is another story. The US justice system may be alien to us, but that is only because it is fair. Or reasonably so.

It has certainly not been loath to take on the rich and famous. Even as we speak, it is trying Michael Jackson for child molestation. Jackson too I used to like, notably in his "Thriller" days—Fred Astaire was right to say he was one of the best dancers ever to strut on stage—before he decided to straighten his hair, whiten his face and lengthen his nose. His lengthening of his nose may take on Pinocchio-like meanings before that thing is over.

But that is the part where I have to say that pitiable as Aunor's plight is, she has to take the consequences of her actions. She has to be glad at least she wasn't nabbed in a country that lopes off parts of the body for various transgressions. I do not believe in *pakikisama*, of the kind that says people should stick by one another through thick and thin, through right and wrong, through good and bad, because they are bound to each other by blood or friendship or nationality. That is a recipe for producing presidents like Erap and GMA. That is fallow ground for iniquity.

I can only hope Nora Aunor, who has enriched our lives, will learn from this and turn out richer in spirit if poorer in years.

'Papabili'

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

WITH THE FUNERAL of Pope John Paul II over, the eyes of the world are riveted on the "Papabili" who could be chosen as his successor. The conclave to elect the new pope is set to open on Monday, April 18. Bookies around the world have reported heavy betting on a number of Papabili—considered to have the best chance of becoming Pope. Three names are said to be favorites: Dionigi Tettamanzi, the archbishop of Milan; the German Joseph Ratzinger, the dean of the College of Cardinals and chief interpreter of the faith; and Francis Arinze of Nigeria, which has the largest population bloc south of the Sahara.

Reports say that Tettamanzi is heavily favored to win, as the 20 Italians in the 117 cardinal-electors are said to be working very hard to recover the papacy, which they controlled for 455 consecutive years, until the election of Pope John Paul II, a Pole, who reigned for 26 years.

* * *

Churchmen in Rome, as well as the Papal Nuncio in Manila Antonio Franco, only smiled when asked on the subject of the Papabili.

"It is not the ordinary 'beauty contest' where popularity and good looks matter a lot," stressed the Nuncio to this column. En route to Rome, Pampanga Archbishop Paciano Aniceto refused to make a guess as to who will emerge as JPII's successor. Instead he recalled a saying in Church circles: "The Cardinal who thinks he's Pope walks out of the Conclave a Cardinal." Meaning, the 117 cardinal electors should be guided solely by the Holy Spirit in making their choice of JPII's successor. In reality, however, many people suspect there is politics involved.

* * *

The Italians had a far bigger ratio during the 1978 conclave that elected JPII (among the 111 voters were about 30 Italians) than they do today. Despite their big number, a Polish cardinal emerged pope. With their smaller number this time, the Italians may not be sure of recapturing the papacy.

* * *

Another reason may be that the Asians and Africans have felt for sometime that the wave of the future belongs to the Third World bloc, which has contributed the biggest to the growth of the Church for years now, compared to the stagnation in Europe. The Africans, especially, argue that while the number of Catholics worldwide increased from 757 million in 1978 to 1.09 billion in 2003, the African Church has seen the most rapid growth. Catholics there number 120 million, a 168 percent increase; priestly vocations in JPII's reign increased there by 23 percent versus the overall 2.5 percent. In addition, many Church thinkers argue that Islam will continue to be a major factor in the world stage, so that the new pope has to be conversant with it. Catholicism in Africa has coexisted with Islam more than in any other continent outside of Asia, having grown up side by side with it despite some adversarial episodes.

* * *

In this light, one of the Papabili today is "perennial favorite" Francis Cardinal Arinze of the Ibo tribe of Nigeria. He was a rather low-key visitor to Manila three years ago, where he delivered the culminating talk in the year-long lecture series marking the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the Carmelite Monastery at Gilmore. 72-year-old Arinze, a convert from animism, has been the Vatican's overseer for relations with other religions, thus he has been heavily involved in relations with Muslims. Some 40 percent of the College of Cardinals come from the developing nations and it's thought that if the Asian, Latin American and African cardinals banded together, Arinze might just miraculously make it. If he does, he would be the second pope from Africa. (A black pope headed the Church for a period in its first 500 years.)

* * *

A prominent, highly respected Papabili, Joseph Ratzinger of Germany worked closely with JPII for 24 years as chief overseer of church theology. But his drawback is that he is 78 years old. Ratzinger celebrated the funeral Mass for JPII and delivered the homily to the world in Italian. The VIP section was provided translations of his sermon in several languages, and for the benefit of my readers, allow me to summarize it here. Playing on the theme, "Follow Me," as uttered by the Risen Lord to Peter, Ratzinger opined that this phrase is also the key to understanding JPII's message. He recalled that as a young student, Karol Wojtyla was enthralled by literature, the theater and poetry (some of which were cited in this column just after JPII's death). While working in a chemical plant amid the Nazi terror, Karol heard the Lord's command, "Follow me." He entered the clandestine seminary established by Cardinal Sapieha. After the war, he completed his studies in the Jagiellonian University of Krakow. He was ordained on Nov. 1, 1946.

Ratzinger stressed that three passages from the Lord influenced the young priest. One was, "You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last." The second: "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep," and the third: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love." In these three passages, said Ratzinger, "we see the heart and soul of our Holy Father. He really went everywhere, untiringly, in order to bear fruit that lasts." The cardinal stressed that JPII was a "priest to the last, for he offered his life to God for his flock and for the entire human family, in a daily self-oblation for the service of the Church, especially amid the sufferings of his final months." And in this way, he said, JPII became one with Christ, the Good Shepherd who loves his sheep.

Allen's 'Conclave'

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

"THE TRASH heaps of church history are littered with carcasses of journalists who have tried to predict the next pope." This quote comes from journalist John L. Allen Jr., author of the updated "Conclave: The Politics, Personalities and Process of the Next Papal Election" and "All the Pope's Men: The Inside Story on How the Vatican Really Thinks."

Jesuit theologian Fr. Catalino Arevalo made sure I got a copy of Allen's book. I rushed to Loyola House of Studies to claim it.

Allen was the familiar face and voice on TV during the week of the unprecedented global outpouring of grief leading up to Pope John Paul II's funeral. Allen provided background and context to the CNN reports from the Vatican.

A prize-winning Vatican correspondent for the National Catholic Reporter, Allen is probably the best-known Vatican writer in the English language. He was described by veteran religion writer Kenneth Woodward as "the journalist other reporters—and not a few cardinals—look to for the inside story on how all the pope's men direct the world's largest church."

That's a plug for journalists as book authors. I am sure many of the cardinal electors now in Rome have Allen's book under their armpits, or are furtively poring over it outside their meditation time.

Speaking of reading, and if I may digress, I found a rare photo among tens of thousands of JPII photos on the Internet. One shows JPII reading a book, while partly hidden in what looks like a nest of leaves and grass, his figure almost overwhelmed by the green overgrowth around him. (That's a plug for summer reading which the INQUIRER strongly encourages.)

"Conclave" is an exciting read in this summer of mourning and expectation. It has none of the arcane language often associated with topics related to the church magisterium. Allen writes vividly and makes the persons and issues come alive. He certainly has a journalist's eye and ear for the what, where, when, who, how, why and, of course, juicy quotes.

"Conclave" has five chapters: what the pope does, voting issues, how the conclave works, political parties in the college of cardinals, and the profiles of all the candidates, meaning, everybody. Allen devotes a little extra to his Top 10.

To understand why the election of a pope is important, Allen says, we first need to grasp what the pope does. Unfortunately, he adds, there is no job description for the head of the Roman Catholic Church. "Lots of titles…are of little immediate help: supreme pontiff (*pontifex maximus*), servant of the servants of God, vicar of Christ, successor of Peter, bishop of Rome, patriarch of the West…

"A 20th-century way to describe the pope might be to say that he is the legal and spiritual head of the Roman Catholic Church, at one billion members the largest Christian denomination in the world, and certainly the most vertically integrated. One way of putting the point: the pope can push a button in Rome and see something happen in Singapore in ways that the archbishop of Canterbury or the Dalai Lama cannot.

"In reality, however, the demands of the position are far more vast. A modern pope is called upon to be an intellectual, a politician, a pastor, a media superstar, and a Fortune 500 CEO. He must produce complex documents setting out the thinking of the Catholic Church on the most vexing problems that confront humanity."

Allen makes it clear that conclaves peopled by cardinals appointed by the deceased pope, as in the present crop, do not elect photocopies of the man who named them. More often, Allen points out, the opposite holds true: they elect popes who pursue different policies. This is sometimes called the pendulum law of conclave psychology.

"In 1903, for example, the cardinals met to pick a successor to Leo XIII, who had reigned for 25 years. He had been pope so long, one of his own cardinals had famously groaned, 'We elected a Holy Father, not an Eternal Father.' Leo XIII's pontificate… opened the Catholic Church to the modern age, encouraged scientific biblical studies, launched Catholic social teaching, and moved the church beyond its nostalgic desire to revive a 'sacred alliance' of Catholic monarchies by engaging a cautious détente with secular democracies."

The obvious successor for the modernizing project was Leo XIII's secretary of state, but the conclave chose Giuseppe Sato who, as Pius X, cracked down on modernism.

There is always some frustration and impatience after a long reign, a tendency to straighten some flaws in the old order.

And so Allen sets out to look into "John Paul II's unfinished business." The chapter "Voting Issues" lists five: collegiality in the church; ecumenism and interreligious dialogue; globalization, poverty and justice; bioethics, sexuality and the family; and, women and laity. I think this is a very important chapter and the heart of the book. What had JPII done in these areas and where will the church go from here?

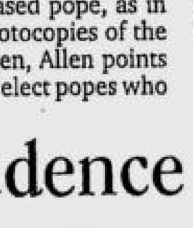
If you're the nosy type, the chapter on how the conclave works is for you. Allen even talks about the bedrooms and the toilets of yore. Hear the late Cardinal Basil Hume of England complain that the beds must have come "from a seminary for very short people." JPII made sure the electors after him do not go through the discomforts his batch experienced in 1978.

Well, as the say, in the end, it will be the Holy Spirit who will guide the election. In one interview, Cardinal Ratzinger is asked: "Do you really believe that the Holy Spirit plays a role in the election of the pope?" I think his answer is rather interesting.

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

Political prudence



THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

ACCORDING to President Macapagal-Arroyo, "It was after my conversation with the Pope that I finally found—shall I describe it as courage or conviction—(to make the) break and join the bloodless revolution," adding that the late Pope John Paul II was pleased "that I applied my deep Catholic ideals in governance with regard to the death penalty, the law against divorce, and preventing anything that has to do with abortion." She then concluded with the observation that "The way he put it to our ambassador to the Vatican is that he was very happy that the Philippines is led by a very pious, religious and Church-abiding person."

Her statements have provoked the usual round of reactions, ranging from polite skepticism to outright foaming at the mouth. The end result is the endless debate about the separation of church and state.

There seems to be no witnesses willing to come forward to state, in a forthright manner, that the President received a direct advice from the Pope as to which path to pursue at Edsa II. Certainly in the past, popes have shown that if direct Catholic action will help save a country from a takeover of forces hostile to the Church, then the faithful can be summoned to the barricades, so to speak. Pope Pius XII ordered the clergy and religious, including cloistered nuns, to go out and vote in the late 1940s, to prevent a communist takeover of Italy. The Church has openly and secretly resisted communist governments everywhere, though its record in resisting fascism is spotty (a kind of paralyzed caution with the Nazis, a modus vivendi with Benito Mussolini in Italy, an open endorsement of Francisco Franco in Spain, and a mixed record on the parade of dictators in South America and on Ferdinand Marcos here at home). However, in recent decades, the Church has shown an inclination to speak in general moral terms more than in specific political terms.

So it seems quite unlikely that the Pope specifically told President Arroyo to break ranks with President Estrada, but that doesn't mean an audience with the Pope didn't have some sort of spiritual effect on Ms Arroyo. Faith is interpreted and implemented by every believer on a personal level, and he or she could extend this process into the political. If you take the President at her word as being a prayerful person (and I think she is, though this is a question that highly excites her opponents), then contact with the Pope, however bound by the formality of protocol, can result in helping along the process of discernment. This is, after all, easily attributable to the intervention of the Holy Spirit. When you have contact with a very holy man, who knows what it will make you do? Speak in different tongues, or sternly march off in order to wait for an opportune moment to proclaim your political independence?

Scrutiny of the President's statements, then, reveal she was honest and forthright about something only she could be forthright or honest about. The President's words are caught up in a kind of circular logic—no one but she can verify her statements: the Pope inspired her, she says the inspiration moved her to act, her actions had political consequences, Amen. Who can judge the truthfulness of an inspirational moment? Perhaps God, but then the Almighty does not write columns, or editorials, or manifests Himself openly in the evening news (unlike many of my brethren in the profession, who seem to broadcast and write as if they have God perched on their shoulders).

The opposition, however, seized on a particular aspect of the President's revelations, and it is an aspect on which anyone can properly comment. Were her statements politically prudent? That is the question. Prudence is something dear to the hearts of an older generation of Catholic teachers and writers; it is after all, one of the four cardinal, or moral, virtues. The Catholic Encyclopedia defines prudence as "right reason applied to practice," or "an intellectual habit enabling us to see in any given juncture of human affairs what is virtuous and what is not, and how to come at the one and avoid the other." Political prudence, then, could be said to be the application of this intellectual habit in the realm of politics.

Was it politically prudent, then, for the President to say what she did?

The opposition says saying what she did was "cheap." Certainly, in the sense of placing the opposition in both an unfavorable moral and politically unenviable position.

But the President's statements are impossible to refute or contest. As I've pointed out, no one but the President can validate her claim of papal inspiration. The only thing one can say is that to divine political inspiration from meeting a religious figure cheapens everyone concerned—including the person complaining of things being cheap.

In the end, I'd have to suggest that what the President accomplished was to bear witness to her version of the truth; it is a kind of truth impossible to challenge. By doing so, she managed, in a few sentences, to remind people of the strength of her convictions, such as they are.

I might add: The President and the opposition are people of faith. In the closing days of the Estrada administration, I've been told there were marathon rosary brigades and Masses held round-the-clock for the intention of preserving his government. President Arroyo countered by her closeness to the hierarchy and displays of a genuine piety. If, by assuming office, she's convinced that God blesses those who regularly go to Mass, and not those who only go to Mass after they've been impeached, well, her conviction is between God and herself, is it not?

Chasing life

YOUNG BLOOD

Pilar Pajayon-Berse

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

AT 26, I'm chasing time—that tiring, impersonal and inconsiderate entity which haunts me even in my dreams. It makes me feel like I don't have much of it in this world, which is really morbid, or the world just moves faster than I think. Even as I'm thinking now that it would be good to pause awhile and watch things grow on me, an alarm clock of some sort keeps ringing somewhere inside me and whips me up, and I'm on my toes again.

Six years ago when I was to graduate from college, I wrote about my fear of joining thousands of nameless faces in the Philippines' world of the unemployed. While some of my peers were having second thoughts about leaving the sheltered life in the university, where problems are short-lived and semester-based, I was fighting fears of not finding a decent job; and if I did find one, of being measured by the amount of money I'd earn.

When I landed my first job a few days after graduation, that piece of writing made its way easily right into the trash bin. For a while, the time-chasing stopped as I immersed myself in my work. But after some years of trying to make out something that would see me through the ups and downs of life, the alarm clock set off ringing—very much like a wake-up call at five in the morning—in the nick of the first quarter of my life.

Following a reassessment of the goals I had set for myself, I resigned from work, got married and went abroad. I was 23.

Away from family, friends and the love of my life, I found myself running after dreams that brought me more tiring sorrows than sweet rewards. How I wanted to take hold of time, nail it down, and keep myself at a standstill. I thought that perhaps I read it all wrong; maybe, the alarm clock did not mean to send me rushing off; maybe, progress is not always about moving on; maybe, there is virtue in staying put and calming down. Right there and then, in the middle of Hollywood (I'm exaggerating all right), it dawned on me that there is more to life than beating deadlines and catching the next trains. And I'm not just talking about power naps at office desks or coffee breaks with someone I love across the table.

Almost three years into marriage and a diploma in "homekeeping," the alarm bell goes off again. But unlike before, when I would have leaped to my feet at the first tinkle, I now look closer for warning signs, for signals that say, "Wait a minute," or "Go." I'm chasing time, but now I know better when to rush or slow down. Time does slip fast but so does life. And life isn't always about work or a day's keep.

I think it was Lucy Liu who once told Ally McBeal, in that TV series, that the world doesn't stop moving even when we grieve, or words to that effect. Just like time, it doesn't slow down even if we run after it as fast as we can. So, did I just say I'm chasing time again? I probably am, but I'm doing it sweet and slow.

Pilar Pajayon-Berse, 26, is currently staying in Japan with her husband Kristoffer. She graduated from UP Diliman with a degree in Public Administration and used to work as a political affairs officer at the House of Representatives in Quezon City.

Singled out

Anne Margo K. Balagapo

I ALWAYS thought I should have my kids in my early 20s. My mother married early and had me at a very young age. I love children, so I thought, why not have them while I'm young so I could be closer to their age?

My younger cousin married at age 25. Her sister once confided to me that according to their mom, they should be "settled" by their mid-20s. I was doing my internship at that time and was not getting compensation for the work that I did. Besides, I had at least three years of residency ahead of me, not to mention the diplomate board exams, and yes, I was contemplating on doing fellowship as well. I would have to go through all that before I get to establish my practice. Only then would the hard work in medical school pay off. I thought to myself, would this doom me to a life of spinsterhood?

Flashback to my teens: Brainwashed into thinking that boys were enemies, I was not to have a boyfriend until I'd be 40 (or something to that effect). That went for my cousins as well.

Fast-forward to my mid-20s: my grandfather asking me when he could expect his first great-grandchild! How ironic that the same people in my family who once warned me and my cousins that boys were to be avoided would be the very same ones asking me now when I intend to settle down.

I was once in a long-term relationship. In fact, my Dad would kid me that I had his blessings to marry this person as soon as we passed the medical board exams. He went on to tell me that he did not want me to have the same fate as his doctor friends—highly successful in their respective fields but no family to come home to at the end of the day. Hence, the running joke among my friends—that I have my Dad's blessing for marriage, the motif of the wedding has long been decided on, and the wedding cake's design already thought of. It is to be a fondant cake, multi-tiered, with the bride figurine already on the topmost tier. Except that the groom figurine is at the cake's base, scratching his head, wondering how to get to the cake's uppermost chamber where the bride is!

Then came "My Big Fat Greek Wedding." Not mine obviously, but the Nia Vardalos sleeper hit. My Mom and I had a good laugh. At the end of the movie, she turned serious and said to me, "No matter how old you get, we'll never pressure you to get married." Gee, thanks Mom. Well, maybe, not yet. A survey among the single people in our church showed that the top concerns of single people these days are their careers and relationships. My Mom asked me if these were my concerns too. I didn't have to answer; I assumed she already knew.

My brother has joined the inquisition. We were strolling in the mall, when this cute bundle clumsily tottered by. He asked me when he was going to have a nephew or a niece. Fat chance, I told him, that it was going to be soon.

Being singled out does not faze me. In my circle of friends, married people are the exception rather than the rule. True, statistics show that in my high school *barkada* of five, I'm now the singleton; so am I in my college *barkada* of nine. But in my med-school *barkada*, there are no married people. Half of my batch-mates in residency are single and unattached. I am very much with my support group.

After the demise of my long-term relationship, many well-meaning associates, friends and relatives made attempts to set me up on blind dates. While I find nothing wrong with blind dates, I am not comfortable with the set-up. It's amusing how people around you, upon finding you unattached, eagerly setting out to pair you off with someone who, they think, would be suitable for you. Perhaps, this only happens when you're in your mid-20s—well, closer to 30, actually.

But I don't mind being "singled out." After all, there is truth to the old African proverb: "It is better to travel alone than to travel with a bad companion."

Anne Margo K. Balagapo will be 29 when she finishes her residency in pediatrics this year at the St. Luke's Medical Center. Her inspiration for this piece is her "singled-out" co-residents.

Water tax is repressive

I'M glad the INQUIRER did an editorial on taxing the use of raw water in "What next?" (PDI, 3/15/05) At this time when so many taxes are being imposed by the government, the public should scrutinize this new tax proposal. Indeed, as the National Water Resources Board has admitted, the issue is "socially sensitive" and "very controversial."

The editorial hit it right on the head: "Make water so costly and you would be practically condemning some very poor people to death." Militant groups are against it, saying it would have a disastrous effect on the livelihood of the farmers. Willy Marbella, spokesperson of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas said: "The only source[s] of water for our crops [are] the natural ones, like ground water, rivers, lakes and streams. By doing this, the government will add another burden on our almost breaking backs." (PDI, 2/11/05)

Most farmers depend on ground water for irrigation and household needs. This is nature's gift for them. Tax its use, and water for farms would be beyond the means of many farmers, and the number of hectares of our cultivated lands for food production would be greatly reduced.

Even in the absence of a water tax, many farmers are already overburdened with usurious loans, which grow heavier because of the low prices they get for their produce. The same goes true for the urban population which subsists on ground water as a source of potable water, at a cost. Now, we are buying this from a private supplier for one peso a gallon. Tax water use and many can't afford it anymore.

And how about our national minorities, like the Mangyans here in Mindoro? How would the government tax them for the use of raw water? The government cannot even deploy enough manpower to check on the denudation of our forests. Or is this another ploy to tax people, especially those in the hinterlands, who are not covered by VAT, the national ID system and other payments—just to add to "much-needed" government revenues by any means?

Taxing the use of raw water is repressive. This goes to show that the financial crisis is not over yet. It is too much to tax the people for using a natural resource to fill a most essential need. Dehydrated people will not laugh at this, but they will resist this atrocity.

—EDUARDO R. SERRANO,
political prisoner,
Oriental Mindoro Provincial Jail,
Calapan City

The competitive world of job-hunting

CONGRATULATIONS to all new graduates. Another meaningful chapter in your life has ended, but soon you will have to embark on a new, more serious undertaking, and a more challenging one at that, in the complex, competitive world of employment. There may still be a great time to relax, unwind and enjoy your academic success. But soon reality, especially on the matter of landing a job, will dawn upon you.

You will be competing with thousands of fresh and old, jobless graduates who are also looking for well-paying jobs in a stable or respectable company. Making matters more difficult is lack of employment opportunities. Unemployment in the Philippines has been a problem for years.

According to a Philippine Labor Force Survey, as of January 2005, more than 4 million of around 35.5 million Filipinos of working age are unemployed. And 44.1 percent of the unemployed are young.

Ideally, wages would adjust to balance the supply and demand for labor, ensuring that all will be fully employed. However, that is far from reality: the fact is, wages are kept above equilibrium to be able to hire and sustain the best laborers needed for efficient productivity.

Other external factors contribute to high unemployment: graduates lacking the necessary skills; the fiscal crisis; government increasing taxes while lowering expenditures. These factors force layoffs in the public and private sectors to lessen expenses on wages and benefits; for private companies, these factors dictate limiting the number of workers to save for tax payments.

Lastly, hiring workers in China is a lot cheaper for multinational companies.

To address our unemployment problem, we have to take into account all the above-mentioned circumstances. Unemployment is a major factor that determines a country's economic condition. For as long as we have this problem, Filipinos will have little access to a bright future.

—JENNIELYN KOC,
jennielyn_koc@yahoo.com

Disrespectful way of honoring an idol

WHILE watching on TV the Morales-Pacquiao fight, I saw a big Philippine flag being held aloft by some Filipinos, with the word "Pacman" appearing on its blue field.

That certainly was a violation of the rules relative to the National Flag (Executive Order No. 137 series of 1966, as amended by EO 194 series of 1969) and a grave disrespect for an accepted symbol of national solidarity.

Nothing is supposed to cover, decorate or mar the flag. No matter how much many of us idolize and worship Manny Pacquiao, we can surely show it without disrespecting the symbol of our country—the Philippine flag.

It is regrettable that many Filipinos are very careless in the observance of the laws concerning our flag. Perhaps this is brought about by ignorance of the applicable laws, rules and regulations.

—ORLANDO P. ALPARCE,
retired RTC judge,
Tabaco City

LETTERS
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Congress rows best for Filipinos

THE QUARREL that erupted between the Senate and House of Representatives over the national budget for 2005 was the best thing that ever happened to this country in a long time, as it revealed for the first time the sinister horse-trading between the two chambers.

If it were not for the quarrel, the public would never have known how Congress could have easily secretly restored the P30 million slashed from the "pork" of P70 million allotted for each congressman, by a simple realignment of the funds to various items in the budget.

The public would never have known that the congressmen were just pretending when they agreed to have their pork slashed, knowing that they could easily retrieve it at the bicameral conference committee meeting on the 2005 budget.

Thank heaven, that meeting became unnecessary after the Senate adopted in toto the House version of the budget bill, and our legislators could no longer realign the slashed pork.

Indeed, it would promote public interest if the Senate and House should continue with their quarrels, as these would lead both chambers to check each other's shenanigans. In fact, the public would be greatly benefited if the two chambers would assume an adversarial position against each other so as to put an end to the usual backroom deals that congressmen go into, most often at the expense of public interest.

—ERIBERTO M. SUSON,
16-M Sanson Rd.,
Lahug, Cebu City

Figuring out RP's population

THIS is in reaction to Belinda Olivares-Cunanan's column ("Legislators focusing on the wrong thing," PDI, 3/14/05) and Christian Esguerra's news article ("Population not booming, says 'prophet of boom,'" PDI, 3/16/05).

The National Statistics Office recently released the population projections for the period 2005-2040. The projections were based on certain assumptions and trends about fertility, mortality and migration as seen from the population censuses of 1990 and 1995; demographic surveys in 1998 and 2003; and on targets set by government programs which may affect fertility, mortality and migration. They indicate that the average annual growth rates for the periods 2000-2005 and 2005-2010 are projected to be 2.05 percent and 1.94 percent, respectively.

Cunanan's figures are familiar to us, not as birth rates but as annual population growth rates. The crude birth rate is defined as the number of births per 1,000 population for a given year. The latest data from the 2003 National Demographic and Health Survey showed that the crude birth rate was estimated at 25.6 births per 1,000 population for 2003. The 1995 census-based population projections placed the crude birth rate at 24.09 for 2005. Surely, Cunanan must have meant "population growth rate at 1.9 percent" and not birth rate.

Esguerra, meanwhile, cites Dr. Bernardo Villegas' and Rosa Linda Valenzona's statements citing population figures as coming from the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB): "… the Philippines' current population growth rate was only 1.94 percent and not 2.3 percent as claimed by lawmakers.… All those claims that the population will double in 20 or 30 years—they are statistically false.… Filipinos should actually be concerned because the country would register zero population growth by 2025 because of a fertility rate of only 2.1 percent then."

These are the facts:

1. The 2.3 percent cited above refers to the average annual population growth rate for the decade 1990-2000, computed on the basis of the 1990 and 2000 censuses. And as stated earlier, the 1.94 percent is the projected growth rate for the period 2005-2010.

2. The Philippine population will double in about 30 years if the trend revealed by the 1990-2000 censuses continues.

3. A zero population growth does not automatically follow from a fertility rate of 2.1 births per woman of reproductive age. It would take at least 5 to 6 years before the population ceases to grow. The projected total fertility rates show that the replacement level of 2.1 would be achieved not in 2025 but only in 2040.

The NSCB has clarified in its website that not one of its officials was invited to any of the hearings on HB 3773.

—MERCEDES B. CONCEPCION, Ph.D.,
chair, Technical Committee on Population and Housing,
National Statistical Coordination Board,
Midland Buendia Bldg.,
403 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave.,
Makati City,

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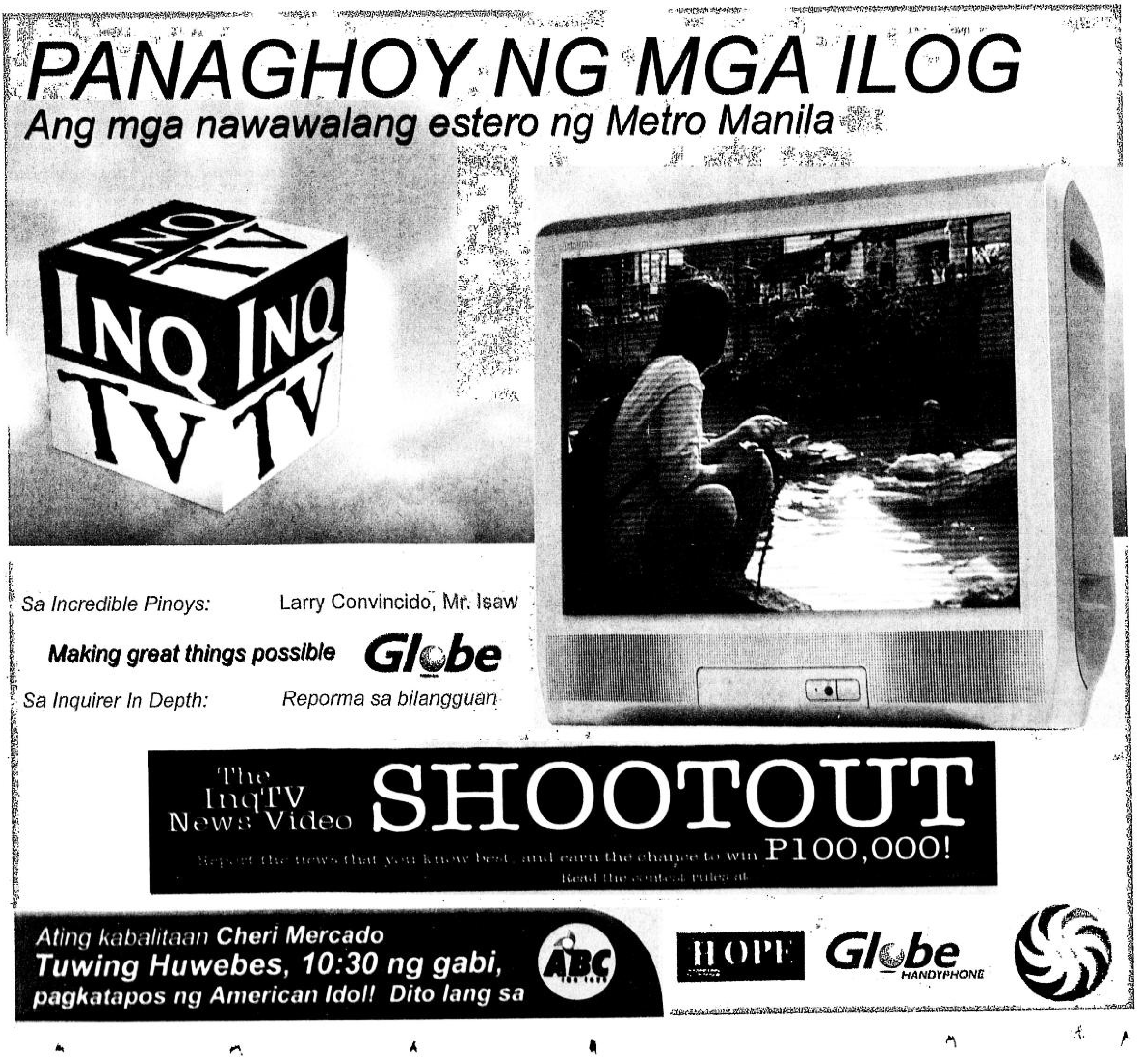
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DOF steps into Casecnan tax mess

By Ben Moses Ebreo
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—The Department of Finance has stepped into the row between the operators of the Casecnan multi-purpose irrigation and power project (CMIPP) and the provincial government and promised to settle the real property tax claim sought by Nueva Vizcaya from the plant's owners.

"The DOF admitted that the only remaining issue is the payment of the real property tax and it (DOF) committed to work for an initial payment until April 25," said lawyer Desiderio Perez, provincial executive assistant.

Last week, Gov. Luisa Cuaresma ordered provincial officials to initiate administrative remedies to hasten the payment of real property taxes owed by the California Energy Water and Energy Co.

Cuaresma also threatened to shut down the operation of the CMIPP for its delayed real property tax payment.

Earlier, lawyer Linda Castillo, CE-Casecnan vice president for legal and corporate affairs, said the firm was ready to pay but the DOF and the National Irrigation Administration had stopped the payment.

Castillo said the company has not paid the province its share of national wealth tax because, prior to the construction of the CMIPP, it was guaranteed tax incentives by the government.

Such incentives were offered to attract foreign investments to avert the energy crisis that then crippled the country, she said.

Perez said Cuaresma on Monday attended a meeting with top officials of DOF and the Bureau of Local Government Finance to discuss the possible payment of the provincial government's real property tax claim.

Perez said the DOF has yet to disclose how much would the agency settle in the more than P200-million tax deficiency during the meeting.

Started in 1995 under a 20-year build-operate-transfer scheme, the CMIPP seeks to divert 800 million cubic meters of water from the rivers of Alfonso Castañeda to the Pantabangan Dam to irrigate 139,200 hectares of farmland in Central Luzon.

It also helps generate 140 to 150 megawatts of power in the Luzon grid. The irrigation project became fully operational in December 2001.

Cuaresma expressed exasperation over what she called as "tactics" being employed by CE-Casecnan to deny the province long-delayed benefits from the operation of the CMIPP.

The province's share, if computed from the CMIPP's start of operation in 2001, is estimated to have reached some P10 million, officials said.

The province is also trying to collect some P229 million in real property taxes for all CMIPP structures located within Nueva Vizcaya.

2 former NPA commanders gunned down

By Vicente S. Labro
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—Two former commanders of the New People's Army in Eastern Visayas were separately gunned down in Samar in a span of seven days.

Sammuel "Sammy" Dote was shot dead in Catbalogan town, on Monday, six days after unidentified gunmen killed Rodrigo Sugalan in Paranas town.

The police report said Dote, of Patag District in Catbalogan, was riding his motorcycle on his way to work at about 8 a.m. of April 11 when two men in another motorcycle overtook him along 7th Street in Catbalogan.

A passenger of the motorcycle then repeatedly fired at Dote, hitting him six times in the right arm and chest. The victim died on the spot.

The police report of the attack did not mention that Dote was a former rebel. But Dote is known in Catbalogan as an ex-NPA commander who eventually found a job as a clerk at the municipal hall.

A source in Catbalogan, who requested anonymity, told the INQUIRER in a mobile phone that Dote was a former rebel known as "Commander Sander" whose NPA group operated in the hinterlands of Jiabong, a town adjoining Catbalogan.

The source said Dote gave himself up to a congressman about 11 years ago and worked for the politician until he was hired by the municipal government some five years ago.

Dote's killing came six days after Rodrigo Sugalan was shot at close range by three unidentified men during market day on April 5 in Barangay Tutubigan, Paranas, about 22 km south of Catbalogan.

Sugalan, 49, died on the spot after he was hit in the forehead, left chin, stomach, left shoulder and nape.

The assailants casually walked away toward adjacent Barangay Silay, after reportedly telling his wife that Sugalan's killing was "meted by the revolution."

Sugalan was known as "Ka Digo" when he was NPA regional commander in Eastern Visayas. He surrendered in 1992 to President Fidel Ramos through then Eastern Samar Gov. Luthgardo Barbo.

He availed of the government's Balik Baril and amnesty programs. He then worked as a watchman at the Eastern Samar capitol.

NPA camp yields factory for bombs

BUTUAN CITY—The military yesterday said a bomb-making factory was uncovered inside a New People's Army (NPA) camp that soldiers overran in Nasipit town in Agusan del Norte.

Lt. Col. Pendatun Guro, spokesperson of the Army's 401st Infantry Brigade based here, said the bomb-making factory was found inside the headquarters of the North Eastern Mindanao Regional Party of the Communist Party of the Philippines, which his men overrun in Barangay Kamagong on Monday.

The camp was raided following a tip-off from a former NPA rebel.

He said the rebels engaged the soldiers in a brief gunfight before abandoning the camp, which was inside a cave in a densely forested area of Kamagong.

No casualty from either side had been reported.

Recovered were 13 sticks of dynamites, 40 kilograms of ammonium sulfate, 11 bottles of ferric chloride, 2 boxes of phosphate, a gallon of acid solution and bomb paraphernalia such as detonating cords, landmine splinter, blasting caps, capacitors, manual bomb timers, electrical wires and two electric grinders.

Guro said the raiding soldiers also recovered documents and several high-powered firearms from the abandoned NPA camp.

"If we didn't get these, they might use these again in making bombs, ammunition and landmines," he said.

The discovery of the bomb factory, according to Guro, bolstered the military's suspicion that the NPA was involved in bombing activities in Mindanao although he did not cite a specific incident.

He said the fall of the NPA camp and the discovery of the factory was a major victory for the government's anti-communist campaign.

Franklin Caliguid, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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Protests mount vs solons' bid to divide Cebu

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Opposition to the move to divide Cebu into four provinces is mounting.

The Regional Development Council in Central Visayas (RDC-7) yesterday unanimously passed a resolution, opposing the plan to break-up Cebu.

It supported the resolution passed by the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP) last Friday during the first of the governors' two-day 5th general assembly held in Tagbilaran City, Bohol.

The LPP resolution expressed its opposition "in the strongest possible terms" the pending bills in the House of Representatives that sought the creation of three more provinces out of the present Cebu province.

Negros Oriental Gov. George Arnaiz, RDC-7 chair, said copies of their resolution would be sent to the House, the Senate and the Office of the President.

He said that, like the LPP, the council supported the position of Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia that the division of Cebu would affect the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) of the other provinces in the country.

During her presentation prior to the passage of the resolution, Garcia yesterday stressed that the move to divide Cebu should not be treated like a local issue.

She said the plan would have immediate impact on the IRA shared by 79 provinces and the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA).

If the three bills would be passed, she added each of the 79 provinces and the MMDA would suffer an IRA cut of about P4 million.

Each of the 79 provinces in the country now is receiving P96.7 million in IRA share.

Cebu island is a narrow strip of land about 200 kilometers long and about 41 km at its widest with a total land area of 5,088 sq km. Cebu province has six congressional districts, five cities and 47 towns.

But Cebu Representatives Simeon Kintanar (second district), Antonio Yapha (third) and Clavel Asas-Martinez (fourth), all serving their last terms, filed separate bills in Congress, seeking to divide Cebu into four provinces.

Kintanar wants his district be converted into Cebu del Sur while Yapha seeks the conversion of his district into Cebu Occidental.

Martinez, on the other hand, wants her district be made into Cebu del Norte.

The towns and cities under the first, fifth and six districts will be part of the original Cebu province, separate from the three other provinces.

The move is seen as a bid to keep the congressmen in power.

The three bills have been referred to the House committee on local government chaired by Negros Oriental Rep. Emilio Macias.

Martinez had asked Provincial Treasurer Roy Salubre to issue a certification as to the availability of funds for the conduct of a plebiscite in connection with the proposed creation of Cebu del Norte.

SEA HARVEST

RAFFY LERMA

Fishermen discover the value of cooperation as they bring in their catch to shore in Barangay Gulod in Calatagan, Batangas.

Suspect in Aglipayan priest's murder arrested

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—A suspect in the murder of Aglipayan priest William Tadena, a supporter of striking Luisita workers, has been arrested by agents of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force, a police official said.

Rolando Navarette, also known as Steve and Ka Reming, has been identified by one of the priest's companions who survived the March 13 ambush in Barangay Guevarra in La Paz, Tarlac, according to Senior Supt. Perfecto Palad, operations chief of the police in Central Luzon.

Navarette, reportedly the most wanted criminal in Pangasinan, was arrested in Mandaluyong City on Saturday. Police reported him to be engaged in various gun-for-hire and robbery cases.

According to Palad, the witness positively identified Navarette before the latter was committed to the regional trial court in Tayug, Pangasinan, where he has a standing warrant for another murder case.

Another suspect, a certain Ka Boyong, allegedly a New People's Army assassin, has been identified by two witnesses through an artist's sketch. This suspect remained at large.

Palad said the police in Tarlac included Navarette in the murder complaint filed last week with the La Paz municipal trial court.

While the Tadena case seemed to make progress, the same could not be said of the investigation of the murders of Mariano Beltran and Councilor Abelardo Ladera.

Beltran, a farmer-leader, was killed on Dec. 8. Ladera was waylaid on March 3.

In a related development, Palad said results of a chemical analysis made on two letters, which were left at the scenes where Ladera and Tadena were killed, showed that these bore the same handwritings.

On these letters were written "Para Keni Ladera (Here For Ladera)" and "Para Keni Tadena (Here For Tadena)." *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Mature Minds

A Father in Crisis

by Epifanio T. Apacible

I am a struggling father. Struggling because I used to think that fatherhood was simply raising children until they were old enough to struggle on their own, only to realize years later that letting them struggle on their own proved to be my greatest struggle in life. Maybe because being a father to a wonderful and beautiful daughter has brought me so much joy that I still haven't found the words to describe it yet. And to see her walk the ugly side of life today is something I still cannot understand. Honestly, I don't think I ever can. How can I when she's all I've got?

Ever since her mother left us, my daughter has become the center of my universe. Since the day she was born, I have continued to pamper her with love, enough to last two lifetimes. Maybe even more. I would've given her the world too, if it were only possible. She was all that mattered to me. Never mind if I had to work 17 hours a day, taking on a job that pushed me far beyond the limit.

Even in these times of economic crisis, I have thought of giving up so many times but my daughter is my life and I felt that I've got to give my all for the person who meant everything to me. And I knew I had to remember this if I were to get through each grueling day. And so work I did. Day in and day out. Rain or shine. I worked, believing I could take care of my daughter forever. But I was wrong. You can't. Forever is a word that has no real meaning in the real world. I have come to the painful realization that today will always be yesterday and there's nothing we can do about it. The only thing we can hold on to are the memories.

And so I can only look back at the times when it was just me who struggled. When it was just me who suffered. The times when my daughter was spared from the harsh realities of life. She just turned 18 last month and is just two years away from completing her nursing degree. It was also last month that she told me she was pregnant and that the man responsible refused to take on the responsibility. Now, she too struggles. But she will not be alone. This I promise.

No matter how tough life gets and no matter how life has confronted us with a lot of questions we may never have answers to, I will always be there for my daughter and her unborn child. She will be an excellent nurse yet. And me, a very proud *lolo*. I will continue to struggle and work. Day in and day out. Rain or shine. I will still give my all to the one who means everything. My life. My universe. My daughter.

Epifanio or Pipo, 42, works as a security supervisor in a Makati bar as he continues to struggle to secure his daughter's and soon-to-be-grandchild's future.

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Vannamei shrimp breeding stock destroyed amid disease onslaught

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

DAGUPAN CITY—The experimental culture of *vannamei* shrimps (Penaeus vannamei) in the country hit a snag when the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources decided to destroy its stock breeders which were found afflicted with diseases.

Representatives from BFAR, the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (Seafdec) and the Fisheries and Aquacultural Board destroyed some 900 surviving breeders of *vannamei* (white shrimps) at the BFAR research center here. The shrimps were brought from Hawaii by the Agrifisheries World Inc. (Awi) in December last year.

Seafdec recommended the plan after tests showed that the *vannamei* breeders were positive of the infectious *hypodermal* and *haematopoietic necrosis* virus (IHHNV) and *hepatopancreatic parvo* virus (HPV).

Westly Rosario, BFAR Dagupan research center chief, said IHHNV causes deformities, slow growth and poor feed conversion in *vannamei*, resulting in reduced profitability for growers. HPV, on the other hand, causes poor growth rate and increased mortality.

In a letter to BFAR Director Malcolm Sarmiento, Seafdec chief Rolando Platon said the virus' destroyed cultured *vannamei* in South America, "thus its presence in the brood stock currently at the (Dagupan BFAR center) is totally not acceptable."

"Under [this] condition, we are constrained to recommend the immediate destruction and proper disposal of the entire *vannamei* brood stock in the (BFAR center)," Platon said.

The Awi, a private group engaged in fish culture, entered into a memorandum of agreement with the BFAR to "conduct research and verification studies to prove the acceptability and profitability of using *vannamei* as a product of hatchery and grow-out commercial operations."

Rosario said the BFAR decided to embark on experimentation on the culture of *vannamei* because long before the BFAR decided to conduct the experimental culture, many farmers have already been smuggling the species into the country, particularly in Central Luzon.

Fishery Administrative Order 207 prohibits the importation of *vannamei* (except for research and experiment purposes), but despite this law and the strict surveillance in airports, illegal traders have found ways to bring the shrimp species into the country.

In 2003, operations on the illegal culture of *vannamei* were stopped in two farms in Zambales.

Rosario said their reports indicated that about 700 hectares of farms were illegally raising the white shrimps in Luzon, Rosario said.

He said *vannamei* is the shrimp variety used by many fast food chains in the country. He said the variety, in its processed form, is taken abroad.

Farmers culturing tiger prawns (*sugpo*) used to openly oppose the entry of *vannamei* in the country, fearing the onslaught of diseases.

But Rosario said the tiger prawns have long been afflicted with the white spot disease, which results in high mortality among the cultured prawns. The disease has no effect on humans, he said.

Pentagon tagged in Cotabato kidnap

CAMP SIONGCO, Awang, Maguindanao—The military yesterday tagged the Pentagon kidnap for ransom gang as behind the recent abduction of a Filipino-Chinese trader in Cotabato City.

Maj. Onting Alon, spokesperson of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, told the INQUIRER that the military has already launched several operations against the notorious kidnap group in a bid to locate and free Benny Cota of Solid Marketing.

Cota was about to leave his home on Doña Teresa Street in Cotabato City on April 8 when two gunmen on board a modified bicycle announced they were taking him in.

The suspects then dragged the victim and used his car as getaway vehicle.

"Our men have launched an operation earlier this week in the outskirt areas of Sultan Mastura town in Maguindanao, where the kidnappers, along with their captive, were sighted, but it turned negative. We will not stop and (continue to) track these kidnappers," Alon said.

He said the military was suspecting that the victim had been brought to the Liguasan Marsh in Maguindanao, where Pentagon chief Alonto Tahir has been hiding.

The military had raided Tahir's suspected hideout in recent days but failed to bag the elusive kidnap gang leader.

Cotabato City Mayor Muslimin Sema said the Cota family has been anxiously waiting for the kidnappers to make a contact.

Sema said since Cota was taken, the kidnappers have not made efforts to establish contact with the victim's family.

"We are still waiting for word from the kidnappers," Sema said.

But in case the identity of the kidnappers would be determined, Sema said a panel of negotiators was ready.

He said some Muslim religious leaders have been named as part of the negotiating team.

Meanwhile, a source who asked not to be named, told the INQUIRER that Cota "is only a small time businessman." The source said Cota has no money to pay any ransom.

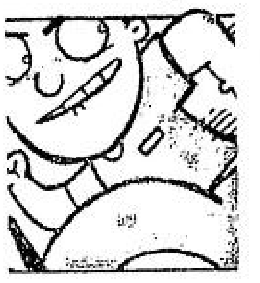
The Pentagon, blamed for at least 50 kidnapping cases in Mindanao, gained notoriety with the kidnapping of several Italian missionaries, including Fr. Giuseppe Piarantoni of Dimataling, Zamboanga del Sur.

It was also behind the abduction of the five Chinese engineers working on a government irrigation project in North Cotabato and their Filipino guide in 2001.

Joeffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau

ROUNDUP

7 mental patients flee



DAVAO CITY—Seven patients of a private rehabilitation center on J.P. Laurel Avenue here escaped on Sunday afternoon. Police said they learned about the escape only on Monday when investigators were sent to verify reports of a hostage-taking incident at the Dela Rosa Psychiatric and Rehabilitation Center in Bajada district. SPO3 Joel Banosan, investigator of the Sta. Ana police station, said the management of the private rehabilitation center was trying to cover up the incident, but they managed to get details of the escape. Banosan said the patients sprung out of the rehabilitation center by taking nurse aide Ronnie Comingking as hostage. Comingking told investigators he was on his way to the patients' quarters when one of the escapees grabbed him and threatened to kill him with a sharpened toothbrush handle. Comingking said the seven patients then hogtied him. Banosan said they were trying to determine the cases of the escaped patients as the center's management would not provide them details. Aside from treating mentally unstable patients, the center also treats drug dependents. *Anthony Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Japanese shot dead

CALAMBA CITY—An unidentified motorcycle-riding gunman shot dead a Japanese national while the victim was in a jeep with his Filipina girlfriend in Barangay Paciano Rizal here on Saturday night, police said. Supt. Edmund Zaide, city police chief, said victim Yoshio Ichimura, 51, died from a single bullet wound in the head. He said the Japanese was with his live-in partner Lorena Erspelita, 30, when the suspect approached them when the jeep (with license plate BWG 681) stopped at the intersection of the national highway. Witnesses said the suspect then drew out a pistol and shot the victim at close range. Zaide said the gunman fled toward Cabuyao town. Zaide said the victim had been staying for four years in the Philippines after retiring from his work in Japan.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

School annex

CITY OF CALAPAN—The Jose J. Leido Jr. Memorial National High School has opened an annex in Barangay Bucayao here. The school has been a sought-after institution of learning owing to its science class, whose program is highly competitive and where opportunities for enhancement abound. Five teachers at the Bucayao annex were beneficiaries of the city scholarship program. Another annex is in Barangay Mahal na Pangalan.

Madonna Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Relief for poor

LUCENA CITY—The SM Foundation distributed to at least 1,000 indigents in this city and Pagbilao used clothes, toys, books and other items collected from shoppers and mall tenants in their branch here through the "Share Your Extras" project. The SM Foundation also announced that they were still accepting applicants for college scholarship for indigent students. The foundation has 28 scholars in several universities here.

Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Farmers to plant marijuana in protest of veggie imports

BENGUET VEGETABLE INDUSTRY
PORTATION OF CARROTS

FARMERS from Benguet storm a hotel where the Bureau of Plant and Industry presented its recommendations for trading carrots with China.

VINCENT CABREZA/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

BAGUIO CITY—Benguet farmers have threatened to plant marijuana instead of highland vegetables should President Macapagal-Arroyo allow China to export carrots to the Philippines.

The warning was made in a resolution of the Benguet Farmers Federation Inc., which was distributed here.

Hernani Golez, director of the Bureau of Plant Industry, has presented the officials a pest risk analysis (PRA) of Chinese carrots, which concluded that the risk was manageable.

The BPI evaluation team reported that carrots can be allowed entry in the Philippines under strict quarantine protocols.

The President and Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap have received their first draft copies of the pest risk evaluation report, the BPI said.

Yap has been asked to review the document, in preparation for an early harvest program that would open up trade between the Philippines and China.

Other businesses

Should the pact push through, the BFFI resolution said the farmers will shift to "other businesses in order to survive, such as planting marijuana, and we will interpret that the national government leadership will no [longer] be the legitimate government of the poor farmers."

Apparently to prove their point, the farmers began distributing free heads of cabbage to point out that the vegetable's market value has dropped.

The Benguet provincial board also issued a resolution on April 4 "expressing their disappointment" in the manner by which BPI conducted its pest risk analysis of Chinese carrots. The board described the BPI process as a study "tainted with doubts from stakeholders."

Golez said the study actually prepares the Cordillera for a worst-case scenario should Ms Arroyo pursue bilateral talks with China.

"Once the negotiations open, every vegetable [in this country] will be ripe for talks because China will be listing them down for discussion and we must have all available data to be able to protect our interests," he said.

Politics

In the end, an agreement will be based on politics, not the pest risk analysis, "so it is important for Benguet to lobby strongly for its interests this early in the process," Golez said.

The Benguet potato is another vegetable that may require a pest risk evaluation before the talks, Golez said.

Metro Manila markets get 90 percent of their salad vegetables from Benguet, but the province has been suffering losses for the last five years due to licensed and smuggled Chinese vegetables that have displaced their products.

The pest risk analysis evaluated the list of plant diseases that are known to occur among Chinese vegetables.

Golez said the studies have determined that Philippine quarantine procedures should be able to control the entry of diseased produce.

But Ester Tuazon, a former BPI executive, questioned the study's procedures. Tuazon said the study team failed to list chemical additives that Chinese farmers use.

Elizabeth Versola, former Cordillera agriculture director, said the local industry is extremely protective of carrots because it is the only product which least vulnerable to plant diseases.

Tuazon said the list of exportable agriculture produce from the Chinese provinces of Fujien and Shantong, actually describes new diseases that have yet to affect Cordillera vegetables.

Blame

The officials and farmers blamed a University of the Philippines Los Baños team on Monday for endorsing the importation of Chinese carrots based on a technical evaluation of the vegetable's potential diseases.

Experts from the UPLB helped the Bureau of Plant Industry conduct a pest risk analysis (PRA) of Chinese carrots, in preparation for an early harvest program that is being drafted as part of a bilateral trade agreement between the country and China.

Hernani Golez, BPI national director, submitted the PRA results of Chinese carrots to Benguet Gov. Borromeo Melchor and the members of the provincial board and the Benguet Farmers Federation Inc.

The report detailed the Chinese carrots' vulnerability to 13 known pests, but BPI and its PRA consultants have determined that the "risk is manageable," Golez told the INQUIRER.

Luis Velasco, former dean of the UPLB's College of Agriculture and a consultant of BPI's pest risk analysis team, and Marina Natural, a UPLB professor, took the brunt of Benguet's ire. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Tacloban to hire 300 youths for summer jobs

TACLOBAN CITY—Starting next week, the city government here will employ for 15 days about 300 youths under its summer job programs.

Cleofa Añover, officer in charge of the Human Resources Office of the city government, said that under the Special Program on Employment of Students (SPES), the city government and the Department of Labor and Employment are to provide summer work to 100 students.

Also, another 200 youths of the city would be given employment under the Work Appreciation Program (WAP), which, unlike the SPES, is financed by the city government under Mayor Alfredo "Bejo" Romualdez.

The city government has allocated P400,000, or a daily pay of P175 for the students, for salaries of those who will be hired under the two summer job programs.

Joey Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

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Laguna farmers win landmark case with SC ruling after 20 yrs

By Marlon Ramos
Cabuyao, Laguna

JUAN Amante, 84, the oldest among the farmer-beneficiaries, hugs lawyer Efren Mercado in gratitude. MARLON RAMOS

THEIRS is not just another tale of a David smothering a Goliath.

Rather, it's a major triumph for the Supreme Court and the country's justice system to win back the trust of ordinary people who have already lost their belief that the judicial branch could help improve their lot, says lawyer Efren Mercado.

On Thursday last week, Mercado and residents of Barangay Casile in Cabuyao, Laguna, received a copy of the high court's 49-page decision signed by Chief Justice Hilario Davide and four other justices, which gave 85 farmer-beneficiaries the right to own 245 hectares of disputed agricultural land.

The resolution came 12 years after it reached the Supreme Court and 20 years since the farmer-beneficiaries under the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) first filed the agrarian case with the Cabuyao Municipal Trial Court.

Many people saw the decision as a landmark case involving the property of a very influential family. "This case proved that the [wheels of the] justice system is still working although it [grinds] quite slow," Mercado said in an interview.

On March 31, Mercado wrote Davide, asking him to expedite the decision of the case. The Chief Justice received the letter on April 5.

"But this case is really big because we won against no ordinary landowner. We won against the Yulos!" he quipped.

On Sunday, Mercado brought his wife and three children to celebrate with residents in the upland community, 22 km from the town proper.

And while the world still wept over the demise of Pope John Paul II, farmers of Casile flocked to their village's small chapel not just to pray for the eternal repose of the Holy Father but also to celebrate what they said was the biggest battle of their lives.

Those who attended the Mass couldn't hold back their tears as Cresencio Amante, chair of the Barangay Agrarian Reform Committee, announced the Supreme Court's decision during the homily. Among those who came was Amante's father Juan, 84, one of the original petitioners in the case.

"I can't believe that we won. That's why we're here to thank God for the grace He gave us," the elder Amante said after the Mass officiated by a lay minister.

But 22 other farmer-beneficiaries were not lucky enough to see the day when they could own the land their forefathers had been tilling since 1910.

"I am just too happy [because the decision came] before I breathed my last," Juan said. "But I am too old now. It's my grandchildren now who will benefit from the land we fought for." He has 39 grandchildren and 26 great grandchildren.

A middle-aged woman came up to Mercado after the Mass and hugged him while crying. "Thank you very much, attorney. You didn't abandon us," she said, sobbing.

Influential clan

The disputed property is located within the 8,000-hectare Canlubang Sugar Estate, a former sugar plantation which has since been converted into industrial parks, residential subdivisions, golf courses and other commercial uses.

The estate, which traverses four municipalities in the first and second districts of Laguna, is owned by the Yulo clan, one of the biggest landed families in Luzon and probably the biggest in Laguna.

The clan's patriarch, Jose Yulo Sr., was a former Chief Justice and Speaker of the House of Representatives. He died several years before the case was filed in 1985.

In their petition, the elder Amante and the other claimants said they have the right to own the property under the CARP because they had been cultivating the area since 1910 when their ancestors fled Tanauan and Taal towns in Batangas after Taal Vocano erupted.

The area was then covered by thick vegetation. Amante said their ancestors developed the area and planted rice and fruit-bearing trees.

Now, the land is devoted to pineapple, coffee, banana, coconut, papaya and other fruit-bearing trees.

Sta. Rosa Realty Development Corp. (SRRDC), which had Yulo's sons as majority stockholders, claimed ownership of the land that the farmers occupied. It argued that the land was no longer qualified for distribution under CARP because the municipal government had classified it as a municipal park.

The Supreme Court disagreed, saying the ordinance reclassifying the property did not provide any retroactive application. It added that the local government also "did not take any step to utilize the property as a park."

SRRDC then claimed that the area should not be included under the CARP because it is a watershed area and as such, should be protected.

But the court said that by the time the Department of Agrarian Reform made the notice of coverage, Casile had not been proclaimed a watershed area.

"If SRRDC sincerely wants to preserve the property for ecological considerations, it can be done regardless of who owns it. After all, we are all stewards of the earth, and it rests on all of us to tend it," the magistrates said in their decision.

"Amante, et al., who have been issued Cloas (Certificates of Land Ownership Award) are now the owners of the subject property," they ruled.

The decision affirmed a Court of Appeals resolution that supported the DAR's granting of Cloas to the farmers.

Slim chance

Mercado, the farmer-beneficiaries' only counsel since the day they filed the case, admitted that most of his peers counted them out as the lawsuit reached the highest court in the country.

Because of the influence that the Yulos could muster, the farmers' chances of winning the case was almost nil, he said.

"Even lawyer Rene Saguisag told me that we only had one-percent chance to win the case because the (Supreme Court) seldom reverses its decision," he said. He noted that the verdict was the result of a second motion for reconsideration they filed four years ago.

Mercado, who accepted the case *pro bono* when he was still with the Free Legal Assistance Group, said the case also told a lot of how sinister "fixcalizers" in the Supreme Court took advantage of suits involving small farmers.

He related how a certain Batengga tried to talk with Cresencio and the leaders of the Casile farmers last month and asked for 40 percent of what they would receive in exchange for a favorable resolution of the magistrates.

"But I told the farmers that it was illegal and they didn't have to do that because we were clearly winning the case," he said.

Mercado said the lawsuit was the first agrarian case filed after the CARP was promulgated into law during the Aquino administration.

It was also a sort of a test case of how the program would succeed when families of known landlords also wielded vast political power.

Experience

Victory was not easy, Cresencio said. He remembered the more than 100 heavily armed security guards of the Yulos who came sometime in 1985 and burned their crops and nipa huts.

"They almost killed some of the farmers here," he related.

This prompted them to troop to the municipal hall and ask the local officials to warn the Yulos against further harassing them.

Soon, the farmers became participants in demonstrations.

It also helped that even Mercado, who prides himself of "ousting the Marcos dictatorship with Ka Pepe (Jose W. Diokno)," encouraged the farmers to bring their cause to the streets.

Cresencio narrated that three jeeploads of protesters from their barangay went to Mendiola in January 1987 to protest what he said was the inaction of then President Corazon Aquino to implement agrarian reform.

The rally of more than 10,000 farmers ended in a violent dispersal. Two Casile farmers were wounded in the incident that what was later called the Mendiola Massacre.

Cresencio also remembered how security guards of the sugar estate prevented them from transporting their harvests to the markets in Cabuyao and Calamba City.

During that time, the main gate in Canlubang was the only route to their area. He said the guards barred anyone who would bring food and construction materials to their barangay.

Despite what happened to them, Cresencio said they were willing to forgive and forget.

IN THE KNOW

The Canlubang Estate

THE CANLUBANG Estate in Laguna covers almost 8,000 hectares of land previously titled in the name of the late Speaker and Chief Justice Jose Yulo Sr.

Yulo bought the area in 1928 from Don Vicente Madrigal.

Within the estate are two parcels of land covered by TCT Nos. 81949 and 84891, comprising a total of 254.766 hectares of land that is part of Barangay Casile. The parcels were subsequently titled in the name of Sta. Rosa Realty Development Corp., the majority stockholder of which is C. J. Yulo and Sons Inc.

In early '80s, SRRDC started developing residential and commercial areas. Early residential lots were used for housing projects for the estate's employees.

The estate is home to more than a dozen industrial parks, at least three golf courses, and more than 20 subdivisions. It is also developing into an education hub because many schools have sprouted.

Sources: Cresencio Amante, chair of the Barangay Agrarian Reform Committee of Casile, who used to work for the elder Yulo and to whom Yulo allegedly disclosed some facts about the estate; and http://www.supremecourt.gov.ph/jurisprudence/2005/mar2005/112526.htm

Villagers still need gov't attention

AS RESIDENTS of Barangay Casile were celebrating victory in their land case against the Yulos, they knew other things should be done immediately.

Electricity, water facilities and cemented roads are among those they need most, said Onie Petate, the Casile farmers' secretary.

Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) intended to start the barangay electrification project but it decided to postpone it after lawyers of the Yulos informed it that a temporary restraining order from the court prohibited any development in the area.

Only 20 of the more than 100 houses in the community enjoy electricity by tapping connection at a nearby barangay. Some have generators.

Residents pay P50 per drum of water that contractors deliver daily.

Petate said the average water consumption of families was around 20 drums or P1,000 per month.

"The money we pay for water delivery eats up much of our daily income. I hope the local government could help us ease this problem," she said.

She and the other villagers hoped that the P42-million road project approved during the Ramos administration would finally push through.

She said the project was stopped when the Yulos warned the Department of Public Work and Highways against installing the project because of the TRO.

Residents hope that the construction of the 5-km cemented road would help farmers transport their produce to Calamba, Cabuyao and Tagaytay, which is just a 10-minute drive from the barangay proper.

Petate said they also needed support services of the Department of Agriculture, such as providing seedlings, technology and capital for farmers.

Marlon Ramos

Nuns train jobless youths to become entrepreneurs

By Madonna Virola
City of Calapan

JIMMY Añonuevo had always been a "problem child."

He finished only Grade 3 because he did not like his strict teacher. He wandered around Mindoro, even going to as far as Laguna across the Batangas Bay with a group of homosexuals or with three girl friends.

When drunk, Añonuevo got into fights. One time, he stole a chicken and sold it for only P40, just to buy cigar.

"My father beat me up for my misdeed," said the self-tattooed boy. He would leave his house until tempers had cooled.

"Many believed that I would not reform anymore. My father thought I would be a problem son all my life," he confessed.

But thanks to the Salesian sisters and the Mary Help of Christians Technology Center (MHCTC) that they run in Barangay Parang, Calapan City, Añonuevo's life has been redirected. Now 23 years old, he works with an older brother in Manila, using the knowledge and qualities he acquired from the center.

The MHCTC trains out-of-school youths, aged 17 to 24 years old, on agribusiness projects.

Training

It was built on what was once an idle 3.5-hectare parcel of hilly land in Barangay Guinobatan in Calapan. The Salesians bought the land from a family, according to Oleck Calivara, one of the staff members and a local youth leader. At present, it has three classrooms, an office for trainers, a chapel and a refectory.

In 2002, the center started implementing its agri-technology and training program for out-of-school youths in 16 surrounding barangays—Parang, Abaton, Silonay, Palhi, Managpi, Buhuan, Calero, Salong, San Antonio, Lazareto, Suqui, Balite, Bulalo, Pachoca, Sta. Cruz, Nag-iba I—and for the Mangyan people in other towns.

It also offers courses on entrepreneurship, with assistance from the Department of Trade and Industry, and food processing, registered with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority and assisted by the Department of Science and Technology.

Lately, the MHCTC developed a trainer's training for rural women leaders on the production of bio-organic fertilizers and entrepreneurship development.

Among the plants cultivated in the center's grounds without the use of chemical fertilizers are eggplants, tomatoes, cucumber, bottle gourd, sorghum, okra, watermelon, cabbage, bell pepper, carrots and ornamentals.

Shelters for pigs, chickens and goats were put up in 2004.

Some of the center's products are sold during exhibits at the provincial capitol.

Like Añonuevo, the young trainees, who used to bring headaches to their families, have their own success stories to tell.

Edwin de Leon, is now a rice farmer-entrepreneur with a new hand tractor. Edmar Cabatay, Richard Incapas and Leslie Alcala each own a boat and fishing net.

Ricky Dayupay is employed as a farm caretaker in one of the Salesian convents in Canlubang, Laguna.

They all received nonformal education from the center, which enabled them to acquire accreditation and equivalency comparable to a high school diploma recognized by the Department of Education, said Sr. Vena Dominguez, agri-tech coordinator.

So far, the center has graduated 86 out-of-school youths and is currently teaching 16 more. Three nuns and four lay teachers handle the courses.

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Conflict coverage workshop starts

THE FIRST of two workshops in a two-year program to improve media coverage of conflict will start today until April 16 in Cebu City with 16 journalists, mostly from Mindanao, attending.

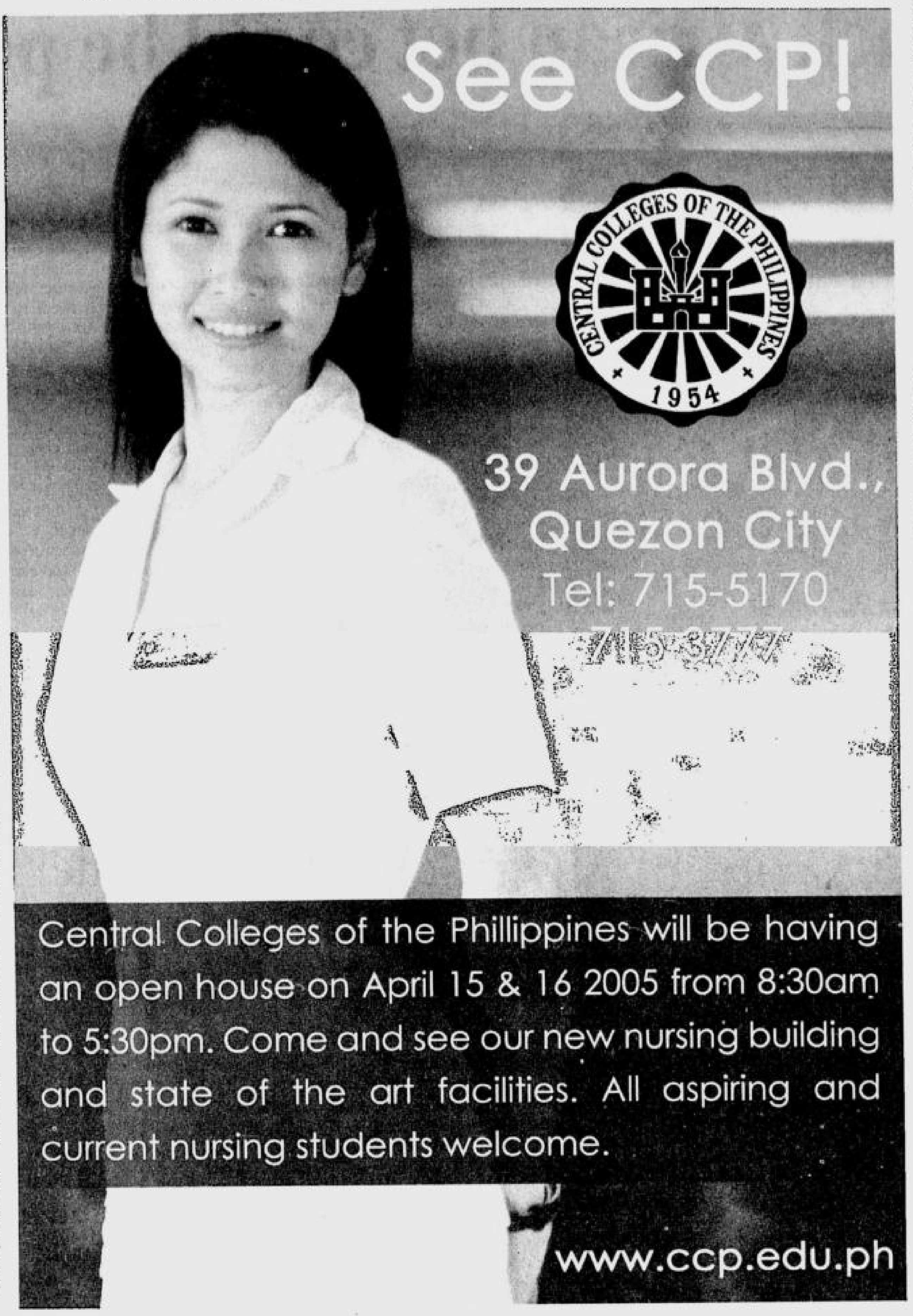
The project is run by the Cox Center for Communication at the University of Georgia, the Konrad Adenauer Center for Journalism at the Ateneo de Manila University and the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute. It will be held at the Maribago Resort Hotel on Mactan Island, and the Marcelo Fernan Press Center in Cebu City.

Among the topics are challenges faced by reporters covering conflict areas and alternative ways of reporting conflict.

Media researchers—Lee Becker, Tudor Vlad and Violet Valdez—will discuss studies on how media portray Mindanao. Becker, director of the Cox Center, heads the project, which is funded by a grant from the United States Institute of Peace.

Among those expected to attend are reporters from Mindanao and two from Indonesia.

The project seeks new models for reporting conflict to be assessed through an analysis of media coverage before and after the training.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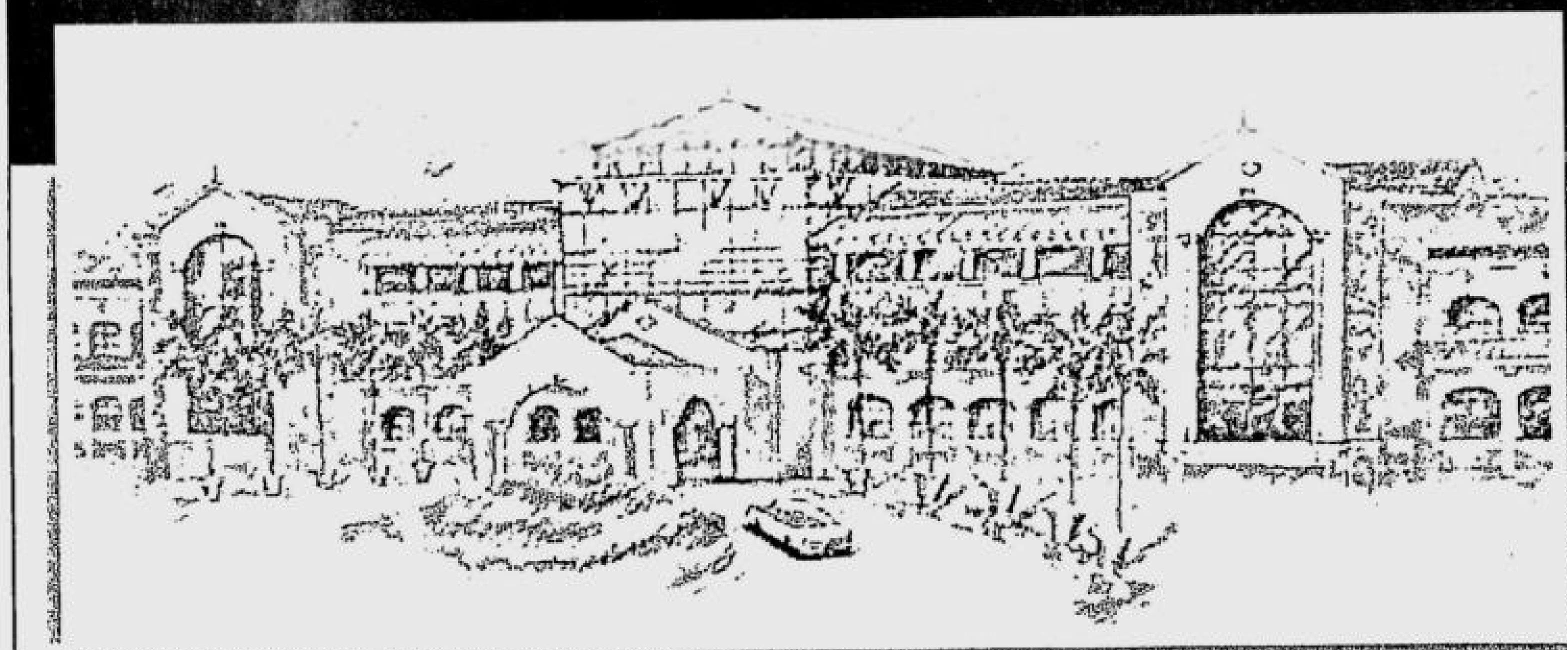

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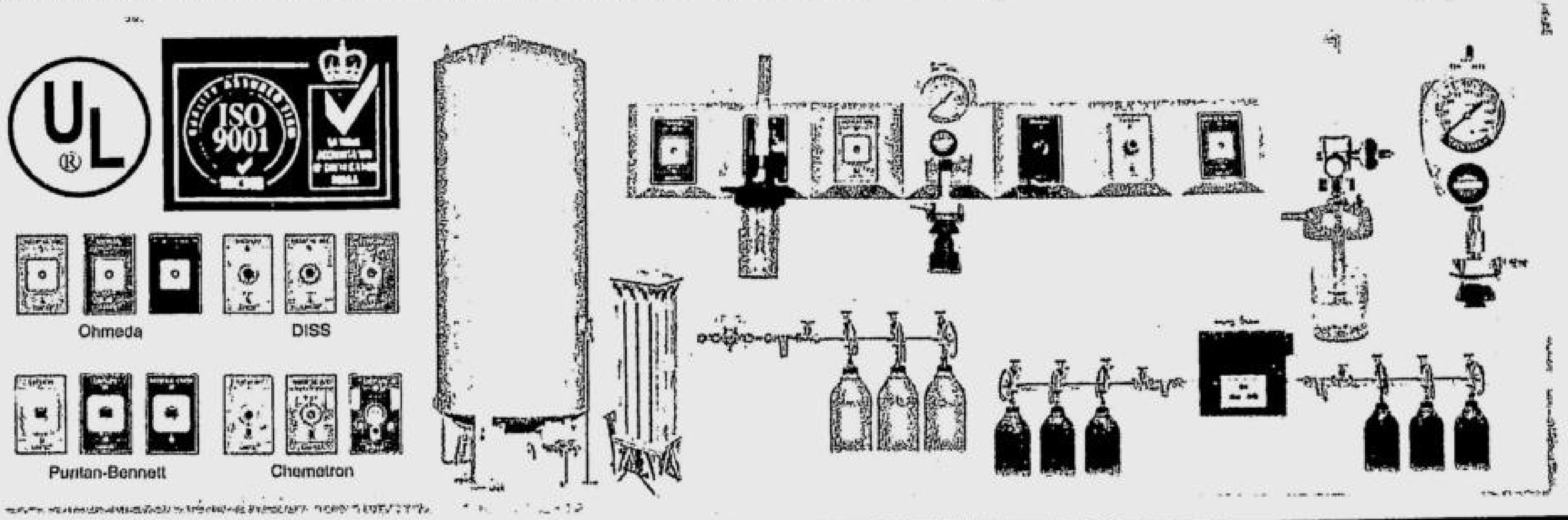

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For 1st time, black African bet could be pope

From page A1

pope," a reference both to the clerical black attire of the religious order as well as the alleged sinister or "Jesuitical" aspects of the history of the congregation, often accused of political conspiracy and subversion in the name of the Church.

Although there have been African popes before, they came from the Mediterranean shores of the African landmass. If Arinze gets elected, he will be the first pope from the so-called dark continent.

International exposure

"We have an African possibility," said Fr. Antonio Pernia, the Filipino superior general of the Society of the Divine Word, a missionary order of more than 6,000 priests and brothers, many of them working in Africa and Asia.

According to Pernia, Arinze has a good chance of being elected because of his "international exposure" as cardinal prefect, first, of the Congregation for Interreligious Dialogue, the Vatican agency that deals with relations with other Christian denominations and with Islam, Judaism, and other religious; and now, of the Congregation for the Liturgy.

Well-known to Muslims

Having come from Nigeria, which is predominantly Muslim, Arinze, 72, is well-known to Muslim leaders and should continue the policy of rapprochement with Islam and other religions, said Pernia.

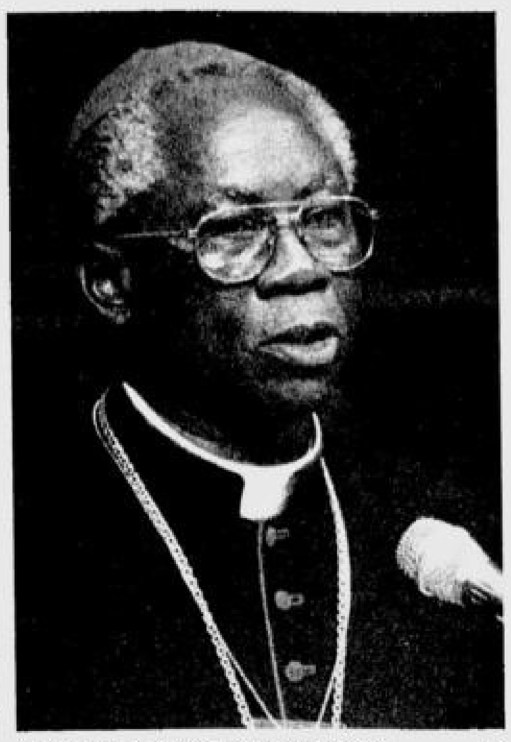
Next to Latin America, Africa has the best chances of landing a pope not only because it is home to a hundred million Catholics, but because it has credible papal contenders.

Less chance for Asian pope

Africa has 11 cardinals who will take part in the conclave. Asia has the same number, but Pernia said that among the papabile, "there is less of an Asian possibility."

As early as 10 years ago, Arinze had been touted as a papal contender. In his 1995 book, "The Next Pope," the late Vatican journalist Peter Hebblethwaite called the Nigerian cardinal as the "Third-World candidate" to the papacy.

"If the great achievement of John Paul II is to have 'dealt with' Communism, then undoubtedly the next challenging task for the papacy will be dealing with Islam. For that, Cardinal Arinze is better equipped than anyone else."



ARINZE: First time in 2,000 years? AP

Before Arinze, the highest black African in the Roman Curia was Cardinal Bernard Gantin of Benin, who headed the important Congregation of Bishops, which assists the pope in making high ecclesiastical appointments around the world.

In 2002, Gantin retired to Benin. He is 82 and is canonically barred from the conclave.

Although Arinze did outstanding work in the Congregation for Interreligious Dialogue, his work in the Congregation for Liturgy is perceived as not as great, said Pernia.

Conservative

"Some notice he is a little too conservative instead of implementing liturgical reforms," the head of the Divine Word congregation said.

But this may change if Arinze becomes pope. "If he is not just working under another pope, he might be tempted to be more daring in his approach," Pernia said.

Theologically, Arinze is a conservative but is knowledgeable about Third-World issues.

Development issues

"He has an appreciation of issues connected with development," Pernia said. "Since he comes from Nigeria, he is looked upon as someone belonging to that side of the church which tries to push the issues connected with development and efforts against poverty and the promotion of human development."

Arinze's election as pope will be merely a natural outcome to the Polish papacy of Karol Wojtyla, Rome-based clerics said.

Captivating world

Ten years ago, Hebblethwaite said a black pope would captivate the world. "And he (Arinze) is black: that would strike the imagination of the world, just as the 'Polishness' of Karol Wojtyla captured it in 1978," he wrote.

The election of a black pope would also mean the church is democratic and promote the concept of a missionary church, said Fr. Jerry Stookey, a deputy to the Dominican master general here in Rome.

Lingering colonial legacy

"It would be a boost to the missionary concept that the church is autochthonous," Stookey said. "The native church should be represented."

He added that an African pope would check the lingering "colonial" legacy of the Europeans in the Catholic church. "The direction of the Second Vatican Council is toward inculturation and respect for local cultures," he explained. "This (Arinze's election) will somehow correct the colonial legacy so that the local missionary church will emerge."

The election of an African pope would also mean the Church would move farther away from Europe.

From north to south

"The Church will shift from north to south," said Spanish Dominican Carlos Rodriguez Linera, executive director of the mission-based Center for Documentation and Research here in Rome. "We will now see the south with new eyes, in a new light."

Army troops not moving out of Abra

From page A1

in private armies of local politicians.

A fact-finding team that Reyes formed to investigate the violence in the province came out with a report saying that the Abra provincial police force was inept and that the private armies were behind the recent spate of violence and political tension in the province.

Reyes also removed the control and supervision over police from Abra's governor and town mayors, effectively placing the entire province under police control.

"There's no reason to remove them (the Army's 41st IB). The PNP [Philippine National Police] is a different case," Senga said in a phone interview yesterday.

"If there are complaints, we will investigate and do the necessary action. There's no complaint yet," he said.

Removal recommended

Northern Luzon-based police officials yesterday claimed that the Task Force Abra, the special team that former PNP chief Edgar Aglipay sent to Abra last year following an INQUIRER series on private armed groups and assassination squads in the province, had recommended the removal of the the 41st IB.

"[Replacing the soldiers] was part of the recommendation but of course Secretary Reyes does not have power over the Army," Chief Supt. Noe Wong, police director of the Cordillera Administrative Region, said in a phone interview.

The 41st IB, which has around 500 men, is based in Lagangilang, Abra.

The commander of the 41st IB, Lt. Col. Noel Mislang, has been implicated in the killing of an Army Cpl. Antonio Rosqueta Jr. on Dec. 22, 2004. The killing was allegedly masterminded by Abra Gov. Vicente Valera.

Murder raps vs gov

Yesterday, Rosqueta's wife, Elena, filed charges of murder before the Ombudsman against Mislang, Valera and two military agents.

Rosqueta was one of two soldiers allegedly ordered by Mislang to kill Mayor Cecilia Luna of Lagayan, Abra. He and the other soldier, Cpl. Eduardo Barcelona, refused to carry out the orders and were ambushed in Isabela early this year.

Barcelona, who survived the ambush, has filed frustrated murder charges against Valera, Mislang and two others.

In an earlier interview, Valera denied that he was involved in the slay plot on Luna.

Mislang, a member of the Philippine Military Academy Class '84, is being tried at the headquarters of the 5th Infantry Division in Gamu, Isabela.

Politicians, too

Elena said she would be relieved if Abra politicians would also be replaced so the province could be "cleaned up."

An Abra resident, writing in the www.abrenian.com website, said the removal of the entire police force would give Abra a much-needed blood transfusion.

"Hopefully, killings, violence and terrorism will be minimized," the writer said.

Yesterday, Wong and the Abra police chief, Senior Supt. Rodolfo Ebardo, said the task force recommendation was for the removal of local politicians' control of the police and the replacement of the 41st IB, not of the provincial police force.

Like good soldiers

"We are professionals. Like good soldiers, we will follow the order," Ebardo said, adding that morale among his men was low.

Ebardo retires today and will be replaced by Senior Supt. Danilo Empedrad, formerly assigned at the Civil Security Group in Camp Crame.

Wong said the replacement of the 529-strong Abra police force would be done in three phases starting on Friday. First to go will be policemen from the provincial headquarters, the province's two mobile groups, and the Bangued police force.

Out-of-town cops

They will be replaced by cops from Benguet, Baguio and the regional headquarters, he said.

Director Oscar Calderon, chief of the PNP Directorial Staff, said that what was important was to "immediately take them out of Abra."

Calderon said the regional and provincial mobile groups of Abra would swap places.

Later, when things would have normalized, Abra policemen may be allowed to return to the province, he said.

But Ebardo said that simply "removing" policemen identified as private goons of politicians would not solve the problem.

Charge them

"I don't think that's the solution. They should be charged. Otherwise, they would still be around. That's just my personal opinion," he said.

He said the move would not only affect Abra policemen but also cops from other provinces, who would have to report in Abra.

The ones who will suffer the most will be their families, Ebardo said. *With a report from Frank Cimatu and Artha Kira Paredes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Ex-coup leader now AFP's youngest general

From page A1

YOU leader to become a general.

The promotion of Lim, who is commandant of the First Scout Rangers Regiment (FSRR), and 14 other officers, was announced by President Macapagal-Arroyo during ceremonies in Malacañang Tuesday night.

No big deal

Lim confirmed his promotion which was a prerequisite to his appointment as commandant of the FSRR in 2002. "It's no big deal," Lim said, trying to downplay his new rank.

A 1978 graduate of the US Military Academy in West Point, Lim was among the leaders of the rebel troops who occupied the Makati business and commercial center at the height of the December 1989 coup that came close to toppling the Aquino administration.

Back to barracks

Then a captain, Lim led the fully armed rebels in a rousing "back to barracks" march to Fort Bonifacio, thus ending the standoff that paralyzed the country's financial district for nearly a week.

Lim also headed the rebel troops from the YOU and the Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabansa and the Soldiers for the Filipino People (RAM-SFP-YOU) in the peace process that resulted in the reinstatement of majority of the officers involved in the most serious attempt to unseat President Corazon Aquino.

LIM: Back on track

Promoted with Lim were senior colonels, including some 1972 graduates from the Philippine Military Academy (PMA).

Pagcor plans for text gaming opposed

From page A1

to offer new gaming products.

"The safeguards outlined by Pagcor are not enough. There are no clear deterrent in preventing the proliferation of gambling," said Quevedo in an interview.

He pointed out that out of Smart and Piltel's more than 19 million subscribers, more than 97 percent were prepaid. Unlike postpaid customers who are registered and their personal information are available to operators, prepaid subscribers are not listed.

"As proposed by Pagcor, it will create opportunities for gambling," Quevedo said.

The NTC conducted a public hearing yesterday on the Pagcor request for a special access code that would enable the gaming agency to centralize text gaming and facilitate monitoring and regulation.

20-percent tax

Pagcor spokesperson Dodie King said that with the special access code, the agency could regulate text gaming and properly tax carriers and service providers earning from the activity.

"The government is entitled to 20 percent of the revenue from these type of activities. If we have text gaming under our control, then we can automatically collect the 20-percent tax," said King in an interview.

Quevedo insisted that operators like Smart and Piltel had stopped engaging in text gaming. "When Pagcor told us to stop a couple of years ago, we already did," he said.

King insisted Pagcor had no plans to offer text games.

Pagcor prepaid cards

But NTC Chair Ronald Solis disclosed in an earlier interview that Pagcor had plans to sell prepaid cards for gaming and promotions.

Solis said the commission could not approve yet the Pagcor's request for dedicated numbers until the public hearing was completed.

Pagcor has a pending petition before the NTC for four access numbers to send and receive text and multi-media messages. It also wants access to trunks with Internet service providers or ISPs so it could operate games of chance through mobile phones and the Internet.

Access numbers

The gaming agency would like all text games to be coursed through numbers that Pagcor could regulate. These numbers are 888, 777, 878 and 787. The NTC said it had not approved Pagcor's request because it wanted to ensure that minors would be prohibited from participating in any text gambling.

"Pagcor told us that it would require buyers of its prepaid cards to present IDs. The ID number would be registered through text, which would be used to validate the identification of the winner when claiming the prize," Solis said.

Broader consensus

"But this is a sensitive issue. The NTC would like to make sure that gambling is not accessible to minors. I would like a broader consensus that would include the position of the Church and the schools," Solis said.

Before the controversy over text gaming surfaced in late 2002, there were reports in the House committee on games and amusements that telecom giants Smart and Globe Telecom earned between P5 million and P6 million in the first half of 2002 from text gaming alone.

Pagcor's franchise involves mainly the regulation of casino operations in the country. But its officials insist that it was tasked with regulating activities that offer a form of wagering, such as the element of chance or the possibility of winning a prize.

Palace confirms PCA head is out

From page A1

formation Agency director general Renato Velasco, sent her text messages asking her to hand in her resignation paper.

"I know that she will be replaced at PCA but I don't know for what reason," said Ermita, who earlier said that the President was sensitive to the "sensibility" of appointees she planned to kick out of office.

Looking for replacement

Ermita said he got word that Malacañang was on the lookout for a new PCA chief as early as Friday last week when he met with Senior Deputy Executive Secretary Joaquin C. Lagonera.

"I was told by Jake Lagonera that it (the appointment of a new PCA chief) was being taken up by the search committee. Until such time that the appointment comes out, I don't know (who will be the new PCA chief)," Ermita said.

Valbuena belongs to a circle of friends of the President during her stint as undersecretary at the Department of Trade and Industry from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. These friends were assigned to plum posts after Ms Arroyo became president in 2001.

Sign of things to come?

The feud between Yap and Valbuena is a sign of things to come unless the government properly handles the coco levy fund, now estimated to be at least P100 billion, according to peasant groups.

"This is a preview of how chaotic the executive branch of government will be, if no specific program for the industry is in place. All the agencies would come up with their own projects to get their hands on the coco levies," said Joey Faustino, executive director of the Coconut Industry Reform Movement (COIR).

The coco levy funds are under government sequestration and the Supreme Court has not come up with a final decision on the cases involving the funds.

Faustino urged Ms Arroyo to come up with a mechanism of governance for the coco levy fund especially when it is monetized. A big part of the levy fund is invested in San Miguel Corp.

He said a meaningful program for small farmers and the entire coconut industry should also be in place.

Housing project on hold

For its part, the Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka (Pakisama) said the feud between Valbuena and Yap had put on hold projects needed by small coconut farmers.

Pakisama chair Vic Fabe said a housing project for some 800 small coconut farmers in Mulanay, Quezon, had been suspended since Valbuena assumed the top PCA post.

"This was a project of former administrator (Danilo) Coronacion," Fabe said.

Fabe said it was improper for the PCA not to coordinate with the United Coconut Planters Bank, the Coconut Industry Investment Fund and Cocofinance in projects aimed at helping the farmers."

Feasibility study

Fabe noted that the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the PCA and these groups on the Agusan Reserve Area Development Project was only about a feasibility study of the project.

In Quezon, a former coconut farmer leader has called for the resignation of Yap for his alleged anomalous involvement in the controversial project in Agusan del Sur.

No right to coco funds

"That scandalous project will rob the millions of small coconut farmers of the proceeds of the money that was accumulated out of their own sweat and blood. Secretary Yap and his patron in Malacañang do not posses even an iota of legitimate right to dip their hands into the coconut levy fund," Claro Talaga, a three-term member of the Quezon legislative council, said. *With reports from Christine Gaylican in Manila and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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Transport groups gird for strike

By Clarissa S. Batino

TRANSPORT groups are set to stage a two-day nationwide strike next week unless the government approves their petition for a P1 provisional increase in jeepney fares.

Drivers and operators of public utility vehicles also want the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority to relinquish its power to apprehend non-traffic violators.

According to Vigor Mendoza, lawyer for the transport groups, the plan was to hold a nationwide transport holiday on April 18 and 19 if the conditions were not met. He said other groups were even pushing for a three-day strike.

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board said it was open to granting the provisional increase.

LTFRB Chair Maria Elena Bautista said transport groups have to make up their minds on whether or not they would like to pay twice.

Allowing a provisional increase and later on, a permanent increase, would mean two filing fees for each unit, she said.

"The board is open to it. But we still have to go through a process, which includes conducting a hearing, among others," Bautista added.

The LTFRB chief recalled that PUV operators and drivers were against the P560 fee they had to pay last year when the government allowed jeepneys to raise the minimum fare by P1.50, and ordinary buses by P2.

Bautista stressed that the LTFRB fees were specified in a 2001 order of the transportation department. "We haven't increased our fees since then," she added.

Mendoza said the Pinagkaisang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operators Nationwide (Piston) was bent on holding the strike on the 18th.

Piston claims to have more than 200,000 members nationwide, of which more than 50,000 are in Metro Manila.

He said there were ongoing negotiations with the transportation department and the LTFRB.

But the lawyer added that he was not sure an acceptable resolution could be achieved soon enough to avoid a strike next week.

JUNK OIL DEREGULATION
STOP OIL PRICE HIKES NOW! -GABRIELA
JUNK OIL DEREGULATION LAW NOW!!! -GABRIELA
STOP OIL PRICE HIKES! -GABRIELA

MILITANTS demonstrate in the Makati Central Business district to demand the repeal of the Oil Deregulation Act, which they blame for the series of oil price increases. ERIK ARAZAS

Caloocan Malonzo's problem, says exec

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG yesterday confirmed that it had appointed a son of former Caloocan City Mayor Reynaldo Malonzo to the city council, but stressed that it was only following procedure.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, in a briefing, said he signed the appointment papers of Christopher Malonzo after these were endorsed by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Ermita added that this was the recommendation of House Speaker Jose de Venecia and by the elder Malonzo in his capacity as Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats party head in Caloocan City.

Based on his appointment, Christopher was to replace Councilor Eduardo Rosca who died in February.

Ermita said Malacañang only followed the appointment process as the rules allowed the head of the party in a locality to name replacements for vacancies in elective posts won by the party.

"The party did the right thing," Ermita said. "As far as the process is concerned, it is right. Malacañang followed the process."

Ermita had been named as a respondent in the 20-day temporary restraining order issued by the Regional Trial Court Branch 131 on Christopher's takeover of the vacant council seat.

"We will know what will happen (after the TRO lapses). We we will have to wait and see how it will be resolved," he said.

When asked why Mayor Enrico Echiverri was not informed of Christopher's appointment, Ermita said it was not a requirement.

"Ex-Mayor Malonzo is head of the party and he chose his son. Whatever Malonzo did is his problem," Ermita said.

No longer a laughing matter this time for Willie Revillame

By DJ Yap and Marinel R. Cruz

WILLIE Revillame, the comedian and game show host notorious for making off-color jokes, is in hot water again.

This time, the noontime TV host was charged with acts of lasciviousness by a tabloid columnist.

In a criminal complaint filed in the Quezon City prosecutor's office yesterday, Ma. Salvacion Asis, entertainment columnist of Pilipino Star Ngayon and Pang Masa, accused Revillame of making inappropriate sexual advances in March 2002.

Recounting the incident, Asis said she and Ma. Lillian Fariñas, People's Journal Tonight columnist, were invited by the TV host to his home in Capitol Hills, Quezon City late in the night.

On their way back, Revillame, who was seated in the back seat of his pick-up with Asis, allegedly touched her breasts and forced her to hold his private parts, according to Asis. He also kissed her forcibly on the lips, ears and cheeks, she added.

Revillame allegedly continued his assault even after they reached Mindanao Avenue and had transferred to Fariñas' van. He kept the columnist in the van for 20 minutes while Fariñas pleaded with him to allow Asis to get off the van, said Asis.

The next day, Revillame begged for her forgiveness, saying: "Have pity on me. If only for my daughter, forgive me," Asis said. Revillame has a daughter, Meryl, with Vicky Soriano, the sister of actress Maricel Soriano.

Asis said she let it go because she wanted to forgive him, and only broke her silence after three years because Revillame "had not changed," Asis said. She also did not want Revillame to think of her as someone who could be paid to remain silent, she added.

Revillame yesterday told entertainment reporters he was "shocked" when he heard Asis had filed a case against him. On the news program TV Patrol last night, his lawyer Marie Fajate said the complaint was "malicious and a case of harassment."

The TV host earlier threatened to file a libel case against Asis and Fariñas after the two wrote about the incident in their columns "Baby Talk" and "Big News," respectively. Revillame, however, retracted his statement last week.

In her column last April 2, Asis said she decided to write about the incident after she heard a 19-year-old member of the dance group Go Girls also accused Revillame of making inappropriate sexual advances. But in Fariñas' column last April 4, she said ABS-CBN had asked the Go Girls member to sign a waiver, saying there was no such incident.

ABS-CBN corporate PR head Maloli Manalastas said an investigation was conducted and that Revillame was exonerated, Fariñas said in her column.

5 charged for Quiapo shooting incident

By Tina G. Santos

THE WESTERN Police District (WPD) filed charges yesterday against five people, including a barangay chair in Quiapo, who allegedly caused a commotion at a press conference in the Islamic area in Manila on Tuesday.

Charged with alarm and scandal through indiscriminate firing of guns and threats were Hadji Ali Lucman, Weng Macabato and Hadji Malik-Nanak.

WPD director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong said the three were arrested at about 5 p.m. yesterday.

On the other hand, barangay chair Bae Nurhaina Lucman and her husband, retired Col. Macacuna Lucman, were charged with grave misconduct.

Village chair 'liable'

"She (Lucman) is also liable. She failed to control her people," said Bulaong during a press conference at the Manila City Hall.

Bulaong added that they were investigating whether or not the guns of the suspects were properly documented.

"If we find out that their guns are not licensed, we will charge them with illegal possession of firearms," he said.

On Tuesday, leaders of the National Muslim Peace and Order Council (NMPOC) were holding a press conference when Macacuna Lucman and his men allegedly fired shots in the air at about 1 p.m.

Mediamen complained that they were harassed and shoved out of the Islamic Center where the press conference was being held.

"Lucman was very angry because he thought we did not inform him of our activity," NMPOC chair Datu Amerol Gulam-Ambiong said.

But the Lucmans denied the allegations, saying they were only concerned over the mediamen's safety.

No one was hurt in the incident.

17 women rescued from massage parlor

By Margaux C. Ortiz

AGENTS of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) rescued on Monday 17 women, possibly including minors, who were allegedly being allowed to work as sex workers in a Quezon City massage parlor masquerading as a health club.

At the same time, operatives from the NBI's Anti-Human Trafficking Division (AHTRAD) and National Capital Region (NCR) office also arrested officials and employees of the Executive Health Club at 1182 Quezon Avenue.

Club officials

Arrested were Arturo Torio, club supervisor; Joel Lappay, assistant supervisor; Jovina Moldez, receptionist; and Marianne Gabiola, employee.

Club owners and chief executive officers Reynaldo Morelos, Romy Carlos, and a certain "Sir Triple" are at large.

According to the AHTRAD, the agents conducted surveillance on the club after receiving information that minors were being forced to engaged in prostitution while working as massage attendants.

Aquarium

The women were allegedly "displayed" inside a glass enclosure, called an aquarium, where male patrons could view them and make a selection.

Patrons then reportedly paid the cashier fees ranging from P1,200 to P1,600, depending on the type of massage or service that they wanted.

The agents conducted the entrapment operation on April 11, using marked money as bait.

Charges of white slavery and violation of Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 have been filed against the suspects before the Department of Justice.

METROBRIEFS

Pro-green tutors

EDUCATORS are environmentalists, too.This was stressed by Manila Division of City Schools Supt. Ma. Luisa Quinones as she assured Winner Foundation, caretakers of the Arroceros Forest Park in Manila that they would not harm any tree during the construction of their headquarters in the park."We do not intend to harm the environment. We are, in fact, proponents of proper environmental management. These are the values we teach our faculty and students," she said. The Winner Foundation had appealed to Manila officials to let them continue the job of being caretakers of the 2.1-hectare property. "What about our lungs? We're very congested in our office at the fourth floor of the Manila City Hall. Why don't they visit us so they will see our plight? Maybe it could help them have a better understanding on why we need to put up a new building," she said. *Tina G. Santos*

DE registration

"Alumni" of the Philippines Daily Express are urged to notify the organizing committee chaired by San Fernando, La Union Mayor Mary Jane C. Ortega to register for their 33rd grand reunion at the National Press Club on May 7. The last reunion was held three years ago with the late Teddy Berbano as organizing committee chair. DE "alumni" may call 3010521 to 22 (Alice Reyes), 6461393 (Ella Buenaventura), or 09176244464 (Evelyn Diao) for details.

What did Mussomeli say wrong?

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

THERE was nothing in the transcript of the interview with US Charge d'Affaires Joseph Mussomeli that should make our officials angry.

The guy didn't say anything wrong. He was just being straightforward.

What he said: "Personally, I'm worried that we're (referring to the US government—RT) not worried enough. I think the real danger here, and the danger that has been here since the mid-'90s, is that we're not focused enough on the threat here. It's not the sort of threat that we should be worried about coming here on a day-to-day basis. The threat is more long-term: that Mindanao is such a lawless—certain portions of Mindanao—are so lawless, so porous the borders that you run the risk of it becoming like an Afghanistan situation."

My goodness gracious, what did Mussomeli say wrong there?

The government should even thank him for expressing grave concern about the situation in Mindanao. "Personally, I'm worried that we're not worried enough... certain portions of Mindanao ... are so lawless, so porous the borders that you run the risk of it becoming like an Afghanistan situation."

Again, what was wrong with that? The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MNLF), the Abu Sayyaf, and lately the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) have turned some parts of Mindanao into a "no man's land."

So, you blame Mussomeli for telling the truth?

Only our real friends will tell us what's wrong with us. Remember, Mussomeli is an official of the US, our No. 1 ally against terrorism.

I know how our government feels about it. It's no different from some African-Americans who would probably kill a non-Black for calling them "niggers." But it's all right for a fellow Black American to call another a "nigger."

Our government is the same. It allows criticism from Filipinos, but not from foreigners.

* * *

May the Supreme Court decision on the poll protest filed by defeated presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. (deceased) put an end to the issue that has divided the country.

The citizenry should now focus on helping the nation in its road to economic recovery.

In this time of economic crisis, Filipinos should unite.

* * *

Katsiaryna "Katti" Aleinik Colet, 23, of Minsk, Belarus, has been detained by the Bureau of Immigration (BI) and about to be deported allegedly upon the instigation of her husband, a scion of the prominent Colet family of Pangasinan.

Katti says she came to know Baldomero "Bobby" Colet, 52, through the Internet. She came to the Philippines upon Bobby's invitation.

They got married on June 30, 2002 at the Casino Español in Manila. The wedding sponsors included Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, former PNP and Land Transportation Office chief Roberto Lastimoso, and NBI Regional Director Edmund Arugay.

Katti claimed that a few months after they got married, Bobby had inflicted her with physical and verbal abuse.

According to her, Bobby had a "questionable" sexual orientation. He would allegedly ask Katti to invite another man to witness their sex act.

Bobby, on the other hand, accused her of being mentally unbalanced.

Before the immigration bureau passes judgment on Katti, why doesn't it listen to her first?

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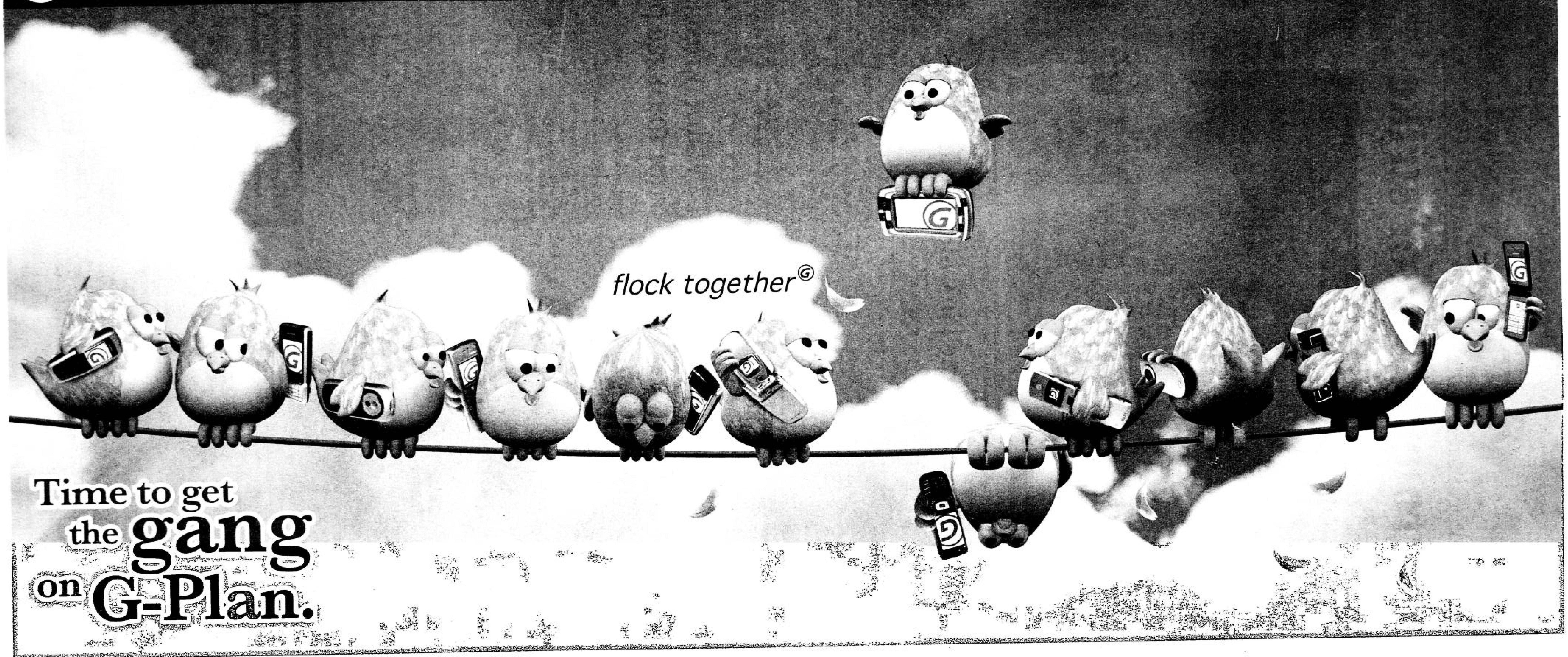

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GOLF: 2005 Augusta Masters Day Three; 4 p.m. (r); STAR Sports—Take another look at third round action from Augusta.

TENNIS: ATP Monte Carlo Masters; 12 noon, 2 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.; STAR Sports—Catch second round and quarterfinal tennis action from Monte Carlo.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

Compiled by L. Manguiat

Tañamor captures gold in King's Cup

HARRY Tañamor could end up leading the country's bid in the Southeast Asian Games.

HARRY Tañamor hammered Indonesian Ramdhani Kamal without letup to capture the light flyweight gold medal in the 26th King's Cup International Boxing Championship in Bangkok, Thailand.

Tañamor, the 26-year-old Armyman from Zamboanga City, never allowed Kamal to settle into the match on the way to a lopsided 37-12 count that gave Team Philippines a fifth-place finish in the 18-team, 15-nation world ranking tournament.

"I poured it all out right at the start and never let up," said Tañamor in Filipino. "I only eased up in the final round when I was sure of the gold. I started dancing around him."

Tañamor, the 2003 World Championships bronze medalist, zoomed to a 29-10 lead going into the fourth round.

While it was the lone medal bagged by the six-man RP squad, sent to this tough tournament by the First Gentleman Foundation and San Miguel Corp. with support from Pacific Heights, it was enough to prop up the Philippines to the elite list in the tourney behind host Thailand, North Korea, Russia and Pakistan.

Thailand wound up with three gold medals, while the North Koreans brought home two, and Russia and Pakistan took one each.

"We are pleased with our result in this tournament," said Manny Lopez, president of the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines, which is using the tournament as a qualifier for the team which will see action in the 2005 Manila Southeast Asian Games.

"Coaches Leopoldo Cantancio and Elmer Pamisa and our new talents, particularly bantamweight Rolando Magbanua and lightweight Anthony Marcial, are going home with the lessons learned from their initial exposure to tournaments of this magnitude," Lopez said.

The other members of the team, veterans flyweight Violito Payla, light welterweight Florencio Ferrer and middleweight Francis Joven, lost their quarterfinals bouts but put up a tough stance.

The team returns to Manila on Wednesday.

Pacquiao, Morales double-header likely—Arum

THE WORLD'S best featherweight and junior lightweight are in hot pursuit of the planet's purest warrior at 130 pounds.

Manny Pacquiao, whose epic victory over Marco Antonio Barrera in 2003 catapulted him into superstar status, and Barrera, who has rebounded from that loss to capture the 130-lb crown with a victory over Erik Morales in their rubber match also last year, are both eyeing another crack at Morales within the year.

Yesterday, promoter Bob Arum, in an interview with Boxingscene, said he relishes the idea of putting up a double-header sometime in September with Morales and Pacquiao topbilling a card against separate opponents and if both come out victorious, a rematch will then be made in December.

Arum, however, warned that this scenario is contingent on Pacquiao's handlers—Shelly Finkel and Murad Muhammad—coming to terms regarding their highly publicized squabbling over pay-per-view incomes derived from the March 19 bout between Pacquiao and Morales.

Pacquiao, who had earlier indicated he will now be more involved in his own business affairs, was set to leave for the United States last night to settle his pay-per-view problems with Muhammad as well as the alleged non-payment of his taxes due the IRS since he started fighting in the United States.

Barrera, following his two-round destruction of Mzonke Fana, has hinted that a fourth bout with Morales is preferred over a rematch with Pacquiao. Barrera said he has "everything to lose and very little to gain" by beating Pacquiao at this time.

"Right now it doesn't make sense to fight Pacquiao, he just lost a fight with Erik Morales," Barrera told Boxingscene's Rick Reeno. "Everyone will say I beat him because of what happened in his last fight."

Salven Lagumbay, contributor

Aquino stars as Realtors nip Hotdogs

GAME TODAY (*Bogo, Cebu*)
6:15 p.m.—Coca-Cola vs Alaska

By June Navarro

MARLOU Aquino rediscovered his lethal form in the paint to help Sta. Lucia Realty rally from a huge double-digit deficit for a 93-92 victory over Purefoods in the 2005 Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

Typically languid on every Sta. Lucia outing, the 6-foot-9 giant veered away from the usual by banging in 16 of his 19 points in a second-half charge that saw the Realtors overcome an 18-point setback and put to waste a great rebounding effort by Purefoods import Antonio Smith.

Smith scored just 11 points but grabbed 33 rebounds, the most for any player since Michael Hackett registered 45 boards on Nov. 24, 1985. Smith ranks third in the all-time list after Hackett and Billy Robinson (40 rebounds).

Ryan Fletcher, hurting with a groin injury, chipped in 20 points and 10 rebounds, while Kenneth Duremdes had 22 points, including five straight points that gave the Realtors an 87-84 cushion which they sustained the rest of the way.

"We're not a strong team and we don't have a deep bench," said Sta. Lucia Realty coach Alfrancis Chua. "But with a little sprinkling of diligence and aggressiveness, we can get things done."

By snapping a five-game losing streak, the Realtors improved to 2-6 and averted what could have been their worst start in a conference since the Fiesta Cup last year.

"We're down but we're not yet out," said Chua, whose Realtors dealt the TJ Hotdogs their third straight defeat. "We'll be there and hopefully squeeze in more victories to keep us afloat."

Kerby Raymundo finished with 21 points and 10 rebounds, while Noy Castillo and Jun Limpot added 16 points each for the TJ Hotdogs, who dropped their fourth game for an even 4-4 slate.

Led by Smith, the TJ Hotdogs had beaten the Realtors off the boards, 61-41, but committed a total of 22 turnovers against Sta. Lucia's nine.

"It was a good thing he (Smith) grabbed those rebounds but this is not about rebounding, it's about scoring," said Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio.

Castillo scored the TJ Hotdogs' last eight points, including back-to-back three-pointers in the final 12.6 seconds, but Duremdes and Aquino made the last four freethrows that cushioned the impact.

Aquino conspired with Duremdes and Nelbert Omolon in a searing third-quarter run as the Realtors battled back from 44-62 and led, 74-73, on a Paolo Mendoza triple.

The scores:

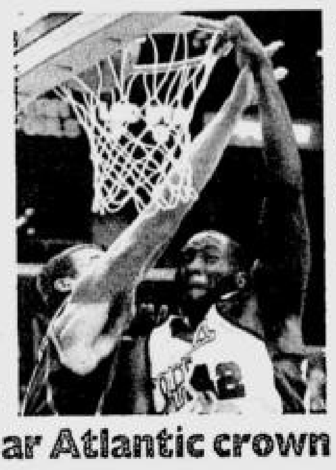
First Game

STA. LUCIA 93—Duremdes 22, Fletcher 20, Aquino 19, Espino 15, Mendoza 9, Omolon 4, Demape 4, Tolomia 0, Gonzales 0.

PUREFOODS 92—Raymundo 21, Limpot 16, Castillo 16, Smith 11, Yap 11, Simon 11, Artadi 4, Evangelista 2, Hrabak 0, Yee 0.

Quarters: 19-29, 44-59, 69-73, 93-92

WHAT'S INSIDE



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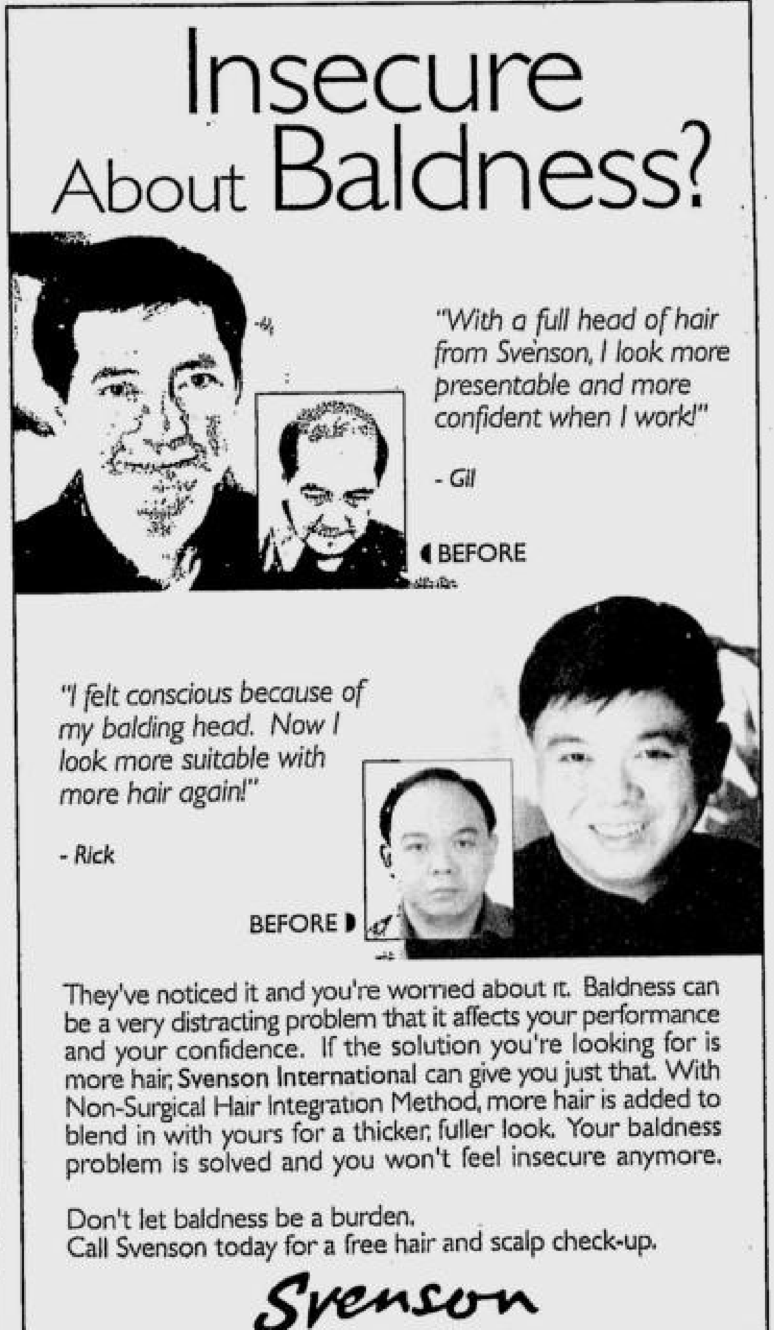

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Scoop honors Filipino Olympians tonight

THE PHILIPPINE Olympians Association, the exclusive organization of living Filipino Olympians will hold its second general assembly today from 4 to 6 p.m. at Ballroom A of the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club.

Main speaker during the assembly is Jose Cojuangco Jr., the new president of the Philippine Olympic committee which is expected to expound on the role of Olympians in youth and sports development and the Southeast Asian Games to be held in Manila in December.

The Olympians Association will also announce the first recipients of the ARETE Awards, recognizing individuals and institutions that epitomize virtue, excellence and goodness in sports.

During the occasion, the Sports Commentators Organization of the Philippines (Scoop) will also honor the Olympians with special awards given to the Olympian medalists who have given honors to the country in 80 years of participation in the Olympics.

The Philippine Olympians Association was founded in 2002. It is a recognized body of the Philippine Olympic Committee and is affiliated with the World Olympians Association, composed of over 10,000 Olympians worldwide.

Heading the Olympians organization is Rafael Hechanova as chair, Arturo Macapagal as president, Ral Rosario, secretary general and Akiko Thomson, treasurer.

The Philippines first participated in the Olympics in 1928 in Amsterdam. Since then, 398 Filipino Olympians have participated in 21 sports.

Welcoat battles Granny Goose

GAMES TODAY (FEU Gym)
2 p.m.—Nenaco vs Bacchus
4 p.m.—Granny Goose vs Welcoat

WELCOAT-St. Benilde has been getting an unexpected boost from Jay-A Coching in the PBL Unity Cup.

And the Paintmasters would certainly like to see more of Coching's contributions when they gun for a share of the lead against Granny Goose at 4 p.m. today at the FEU Gym.

"Coching has been stepping up," said coach Caloy Garcia. "I think the team's passion during practice was carried over during our games."

Nenaco-San Beda and Bacchus Energy Drink will vie for their first victory at 2 p.m.

"I must admit that we're not yet in (the other teams') level but I'm not losing patience," said Nenaco coach Nash Racela. "I have no problem as long as they are giving their best. I just hope we could play better."

Anthony Washington delivered 16 points and 10 rebounds in the Paintmasters' 72-66 win over Toyota Otis, but it was Coching who consistently showed resolve in the last two outings by averaging 14 points.

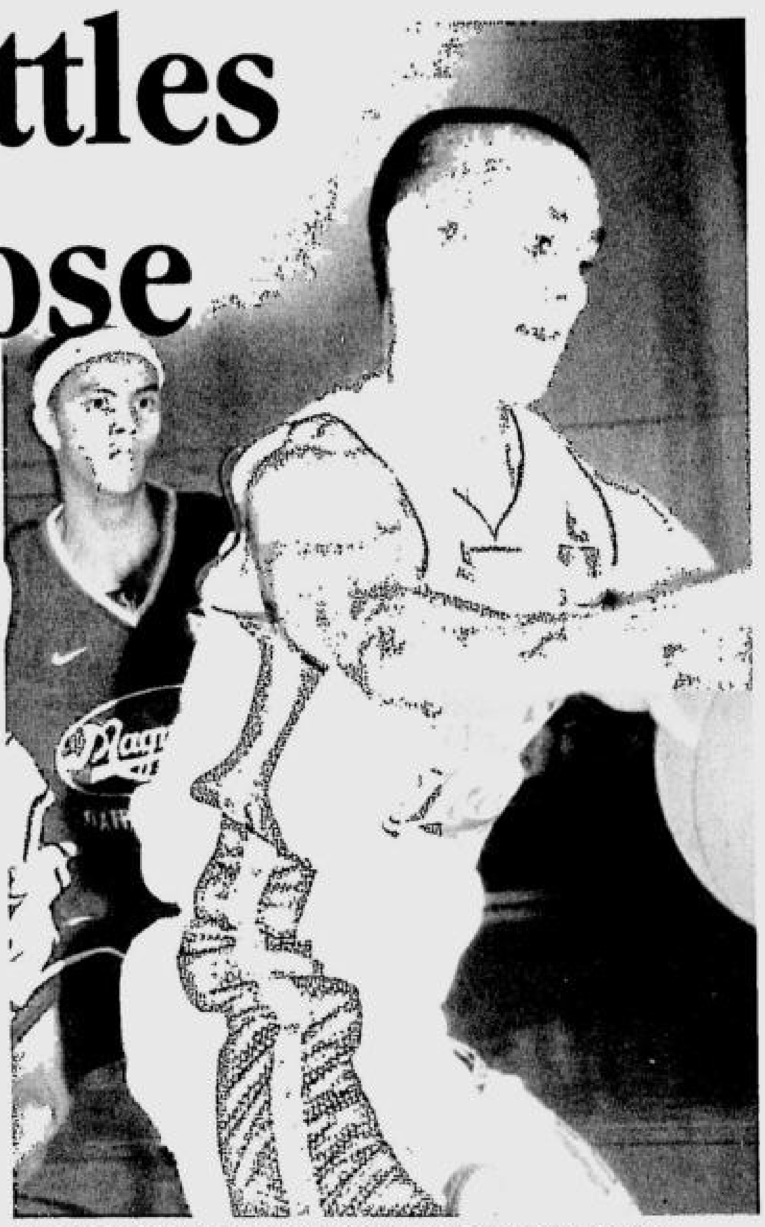
Granny Goose will try to get back on track behind JR Quiñahan and Jett Latonio after bowing to Harbour Centre, 69-65 last Thursday.

Dennis Concha scored 16 points in Granny Goose's 62-49 win over Bacchus, but went 0-for-10 in his last outing.

Nenaco lost its first two matches by an average of 30 points, but has been getting strong performances from Jerome Paterno and Yousif Aljamal, who averaged 15.5 points and 10.5 rebounds.

Paolo Hubalde, Jemal Vizcarra and Nani Epondulan, meanwhile, will try to end Bacchus' winning drought.

The Kings, known as Air Philippines last conference, have lost 14 straight games since the Open Championship. *Jasmine W. Payo*



MAGNOLIA'S Arwind Santos (left) guards Montaña's Froilan Baguion in their game won by Montaña, 64-55. MITCH MAURICIO

Tenorio wants to play for RP five

By Dennis U. Eroa
Inquirer Libre sports editor

HERE'S one very welcome guest to the Philippine men's basketball team deep in preparations for the 2005 SEA Games.

LA Tenorio, Ateneo's ace playmaker, is knocking on the BAP's door to give him the chance to wear the national colors and lift the country to the gold medal in the SEAG.

In an exclusive interview, Tenorio said he's determined to play for the country in the SEAG the country is hosting from Nov. 27- Dec. 5.

"Playing for the country is a tremendous honor," said Tenorio. "Yes, I want to compete in the coming SEA Games,"

The 5-foot-8 Tenorio saw action in the Asian Young Men's championship in Tehran, Iran, last year.

Known for his gritty plays, Tenorio is considered a crucial link in Ateneo's title-drive in this year UAAP cage wars. The Blue Eagle playmaker is playing his fifth and last year of eligibility under coach Norman Black in a determined bid to bring back Ateneo on top of the UAAP basketball leader.

Ateneo, starring Rich Alvarez, Enrico Villanuena, Larry Fonacier and Tenorio, won the 2002 crown, but was relegated to the sidelines by FEU (2003) and La Salle (2004).

Ricky Palou, Ateneo team manager, confirmed Tenorio's wish.

"Yes, he wants to help the country retain the gold in the SEA Games before turning pro," Palou said. "I see no conflict because the SEA Games is set in November after the UAAP wars."

Palou said efforts are being made to contact BAP officials and head coach Boyzie Zamar regarding Tenorio's intention.

"Of course, LA knows that he's not going to have an automatic slot in the team. Like the others, he must join the tryouts," Palou added.

Zamar's team came under fire when the Nationals were beaten by the Parañaque Jets in the final of the pre-season NBC conference at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum recently.

But Zamar took the setback on a positive note and opened the gates for new additions to the team.

"There aren't untouchables in this squad, including the coaching staff," Zamar said.

CRACK ARCHERS: (From left) Ma. Nicole Cuerpo, champion in the neophyte class, Ana Mariel Enrile-Inton (3rd place), Blanca Isabel Villanueva (2nd), Leina Mae Bolinas (1st place) and Ainara Martinez-Miranda (5th) in the cadet class.

TAC archers pace winners

TAC (The Archery Center) bets Jenny Rose Pescasio and Paul Marton de la Cruz ruled the Olympic Round intermediate (18 years & below) division to pace gold medalists in the recent FITA II age group tournament at the UP-PSC range in Diliman, Quezon City.

Pescasio edged Melissa Boo, 66 points to 61, in the girls' finals while De la Cruz whipped Ramon Jenel Sawit, 107-95, in the boys' group.

Other winners of the tourney organized by the national archery association and supported by the Quezon City Council and the Committees on Laws and Trade. headed by Councilor Ariel Enrile-Inton, Eric Medina, Julian Coseteng and Restituto Malangen, were Ma. Nicole Cuerpo and Nicholas Lee (neophyte), Leina Mae Bolinas and Keanu Dy (cadet) and Grace Dolfo and Nathan Tolentino (jrs). Cuerpo tallied 78 points; Bolinas ripped Blanca Isabel Villanueva, 113-85; Dy downed Juancho del Rosario, 68-63; Dolfo routed Mirava Coree Yuson, 113-64; and Tolentino trimmed Gabriel Villalon, 110-105.

Liberica tilt starts today

LIPA City—A Mount Malarayat complex being spruced up for the year's biggest golf event plays host to a full field of 150 teams starting today for the Liberica Invitational, the club's annual member-guest tournament.

A brand new car from Mitsubishi and a golf cart from Turf Company will be up for grabs in designated par 3's of Malarayat's three nines, which are nearing their best shape in preparation for the Philippine Open on May 19-22.

Adel Chavez and guest Philip Lindog are the defending overall champions of the tournament supported by Citimotors, San Miguel Corp., United Auctioneers, Asia International Auctioneer, Turf Company, Master Sports and Batangas Gov. Armand Sanchez.

"The players will actually get a feel of RP Open conditions in the tournament," said Malarayat chair Arch. Antonio Turalba Sr.

"The key is to be able to conquer the greens," said tournament chair Mark Mendoza. Seventy-five teams see action today with the next 75 to tee off tomorrow.

Rotary golf slated

THE ROTARY Club of Midtown Quezon City, District 3780, is holding a golf tournament today at the Sherwood Hills Golf Club, Trece Martires City, Cavite. The tournament is in line with the club's commitment to provide the "Rotary Way" kind of service that it has been upholding through its outreach programs. This is also the club's way of celebrating with its fellow Rotarians the 100 Years of Rotary and its 20 years of service led by Centennial president Emerito "Buboy" Remulla. Tickets are available c/o Arch. Liza Padua (5229211) and Judge Raul Villanueva (8738544).

SPORTSWATCH

Parañaque vs Laguna in NBC opener

IT will be the Parañaque Jets against Laguna Spring when the 2005 Panasonic-NBC national basketball championship unwraps on April 23 at the Cuneta Astrodome. Vice Mayor and actor/TV host Anjo Yllana's Jets are slightly favored over the Spring of NBC president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla and Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro because of their recent conquest of the RP-Cebuana Lhuillier team in the finals of the Spring Cooking Oil-NBC pre-season series. Panasonic Philippines president Rodolfo Perez will be guest of honor. The other guests are Padilla, Basketball Association of the Philippines officials and owners of the other participating teams. Yllana has invited Janno Gibbs and Sexbomb dancers/singers Jopay, Izzy, Weng and Rochelle to provide live performances.

P. Princesa Karagatan Festival

PUERTO Princesa stakes its claim as the country's premier sports destination when it holds the sixth "Karagatan Festival" at the Tangkayan Beach Coast on April 29-May 1. Hosted by the Puerto Princesa City government, headed by Mayor Edward Hagedorn and sponsored by San Miguel Corp., Smart, Norkis Yamaha, JAKA and Asian Spirit Airlines, the festival will feature exciting competition in several sports events. Highlight of the festival is the grueling mountain bike race from Irawan to Tangkawayan. "The Karagatan Festival one of the most-awaited sports events in Puerto Princesa City," said Mayor Hagedorn, who is staging the festival in cooperation with the residents and officials of Barangays Napsan, Bagumbayan, Simpocan and Bacungan. Hagedorn has tapped Manuel "Boy" Macasaet and motocross legend Butch Chase as chief event organizers. Other events lined up during the festival are motor boat race, marathon, swimming, beach volleyball, bikini competition, fishing contest, kite-flying competition, sand sculpture, tug-of-war, coastal clean-up, tribal dance contest and concert.

Badminton deadline tomorrow

DEADLINE for registration for the first JVC regional badminton championships is set tomorrow with the tournament proper to kick off April 18 at the Excel Badminton Center in San Fernando City, Pampanga. Entry fee is pegged at P100 for single event and P150 for those playing in two or three events. For details, contact (045) 8609999/ 0918-3902134/ 0917-8120194. The JVC regionals, backed by Gosen, Cebu Pacific, Water Front Hotels, Lactacyd, Accel and organized by IMG, will also have its stops in Cebu, Davao and Bacolod, guaranteeing JVC's commitment to make its badminton development program truly national in scope. For details, check website or e-mail at jvcbadminton@hotmail.com.

Summer Sports resumes at SM malls

TAEKWONDO, wushu and football action swings to SM-Dasmariñas, SM-Fairview and SM-North Edsa, respectively, this weekend at the resumption of the Summer Sports at various SM super malls. A bid field is again expected to compete in the three disciplines in the third week of the three-month long tour, launched last year by SM in cooperation with JVC and Globe, which also features climbing competitions, the ongoing JVC Badminton Open Junior Championships and the PBA mall tour. Hostilities start at 10 a.m. The climbing competitions will start Monday at SM-Davao while SM-North and SM-Dasma will host the PBA tour on April 18-24.

Que sees action in Dynasty Cup

FILIPINO Angelo Que makes his debut for the Asian Team when they go up against Japan as the Visa Dynasty Cup tees off today at 1 p.m. live and exclusive on STAR Sports. Que, the former two-time Philippine Open winner, will join four other Asian rookies in Asia's equivalent of the Ryder Cup at Mission Hills Golf Club in Shenzhen, China. STAR Sports will air Day Two and Day Three tomorrow and Saturday, respectively, at 1 p.m. Schedule subject to change.

Torre main guest in Borjal chessfest

GRANMASTER Eugene Torre will be guest of honor in the Art A. Borjal Memorial Active Chess Open which starts today at the 5th level of SM City Manila's Entertainment Plaza. The two-day event, organized by the Art A. Borjal Good Samaritan Foundation and managed by Sports Activity Inc., offers a top purse of P30,000 plus a trophy. Backing up the tournament, held in memory of the late chess president and patron, are PCSO, Pagcor, Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Meralco. Venue sponsor is Shoemart Inc. For details, call Alex Dinoy, 7441664; Jonas Cruz, 8341845 and Boy Rabe, 8729002 or 8727820.

75 teams join Little League series

SEVENTY-FIVE teams will be competing in the Little League Philippine Series set in Nueva Ecija on April 28-May 8. Four titles each in the boys and girls divisions are up for grabs in the event sponsored by the Nueva Ecija provincial government headed by Gov. Tomas N. Joson III, Tan Yan Kee Foundation, Pagcor, San Miguel Corp., League of Provinces, and CalEnergy International. Boys baseball's Little League (11-12 yrs old), Junior League (13-14), Senior League (14-16) and Big League (16-18) are to be disputed along with the same age brackets in girls' softball.

Molina gets Fide master title

DUBAI-BASED Filipino Tony Molina beat American Andrew Area in the ninth and final round to earn the FIDE Master title in the 7th Dubai International Open Chess Championships Tuesday night at the Dubai Chess and Culture Club in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Molina scored 4.0 points to share 86th to 109 places. GM Nelson Mariano II and IM Jayson Gonzales of the Philippines settled for a draw with IM Nino Gurieli of Georgia and Negi Parimarjan of India, respectively, to score 5.0 points apiece and finished tied at 46th to 66th places. WIM Cristine Rose Mariano scored 3.5 points in the tournament won by untitled Chinese player Wang Hao with 7.0 points. ***NM Marlon Bernardino***

Asian Showjumping Challenge

THE COUNTRY'S top equestrians will see action on April 16 and 17 at the Alabang Country Club polo field when the Philippine Equestrian Federation stages the Duty Free Philippines Asian Showjumping Challenge. Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Hong Kong bets are entered along with Team Globe Platinum's Olympian Toni Leviste, Busan Asiad gold medalist Mikee Cojuangco Jaworski, Philippine high jump record holder Joker Arroyo, veteran dressage rider Vittorio Barba and young rider Daniella Virata.

Puno tries to extend win streak

RIDING high on an impressive title conquest last week, Rep. Ronnie Puno tries to extend his winning streak in today's championship round of the "National Cockers Association (NCA) 7—Cock Derby" at the air-conditioned Araneta Coliseum. Using imported fowls from Kentucky, United States, Puno's Wild Wing Sundance tallied a perfect score of three points in last Tuesday's qualifying round. Also with three victories going into today's finale are Big Dome owner Jorge "Nene" Araneta (Thunderbird Firefly II), former ambassador Danding Cojuangco and Gov. Ito Ynares (Binangonan Balbina), Rudy Albano (PEBR Complexor 3000 Mulawin III) and Tony Tan (Swing MGM SMRC I). Sabong idol Patrick Antonio (PEBR Complexor 3000 Mulawin IV) and Ellan Nagano (Jaen VGB Greenwood) are tied with 2.5 points each. Meanwhile, the next NCA derby blasts off on April 26 and 28 with Gov. Ito Ynares, Richard Bates and Rep. Claude Bautista as hosts. Call 9113101 and 9112928 (look for Gloria Avena).

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MCBRIDE (left) and Tyson AFP

STILL BURIED IN DEBTS

'Happy' Tyson sets another comeback

WASHINGTON—Former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson announced Tuesday that he will return to the boxing ring for the first time in nearly a year, fighting Irish-born journeyman Kevin McBride at the MCI Center in June.

"I just hope these people of Washington, D.C., are prepared to handle this," Tyson said. "It's going to be a train wreck."

The 38-year-old Tyson, 50-5 with two no contests and 44 knockouts, lost two of his last three fights.

In his most recent outing, in Louisville on July 30, he was stopped in the fourth round by Danny Williams after tearing cartilage in his left knee.

"I know Danny Williams don't think he won that fight," Tyson said.

He had surgery—the knee is fine, Tyson said Tuesday—and he's been training in Phoenix for three weeks.

But he spoke about how down he was after having his operation.

"I was in that little square-box room, and I was on crutches, and it was a very depressing atmosphere. I just fell into a deep depression," Tyson said. "Once those painkillers wore off, it was horrific. I didn't know what to do."

Then he paused, and added: "I'm just so happy I'm happy again."

The Williams bout was Tyson's first in 17 months—and his first loss in a non-title bout. He's entered the ring just once a year since 2001, earning a technical knockout victory over Brian Nielsen in October of that year, getting knocked out by Lennox Lewis in June 2002, and knocking out Clifford Etienne in February 2003.

McBride, 31, defeated Kevin Montiy by technical knockout on March 18 in his last fight. Based in Massachusetts, the 1.98-meter (6-foot-6) McBride is 32-4 with one draw and 27 knockouts.

"After I beat Mike, I want to fight for the world title," said McBride, who at least three times vowed: "I'm going to shock the world."

His manager, Rich Cappiello was more succinct.

"Mike Tyson gets knocked out within five rounds," Cappiello said, drawing a laugh from Tyson.

The man once called "the baddest man on the planet," Tyson sat on the stage at the Lincoln Theater with three of his children. He held hands at one point with 9-year-old daughter Rayna, and later sat napping 3-year-old son Miguel on his lap.

He's been more than $30 million in debt, and when asked how much longer he thinks he'll keep fighting, Tyson answered: "Long enough to take care of my children—a long time." *AP*

Wescor riders sparkle

WESCOR Transformer Corp. got three gold medals to bounce into strong contention in the overall team race as the First Philippine Velo Challenge hit its halfway mark yesterday at Amoranto Velodrome in Quezon City.

Wescor riders dominated the 4,800-meter massed start races in the Executives (Edilberto Lantin, eight minutes and 2.08 seconds), Veterans (Ruel Gendrano, 7:38.65), and Juniors (Irish Valenzuela, 6:54.97) on the fifth of 10 race days of the event co-presented by the First Gentleman's Foundation of lawyer Jose Miguel Arroyo and Air21-Tour Pilipinas Inc.

Ranked No.4 and lingering 25 points behind leader Elixir Bike Shop entering yesterday's competition, Wescor's 144 points enabled the riders of PhilCycling chair Loloy Cruz to scoot past MayniLA and Quezon City and take solo second place in the event also primarily supported by Pagcor and the Philippine Sports Commission and Philippine Olympic Committee.

Elixir, which garnered four gold medals yesterday, chalked a 157-point total to stay on top of the field.

PFF U-17 kicks off this April

THE 2005 PFF Under-17 Regional Championships kick off in the last week of April, with the aim of making up for the one-year absence of the tilt normally reserved for those 16 and below.

PFF president Johnny Romualdez said that the youth tournament comes at the end of Coke's Under-16 Go For Goal national tourney.

Domeka Garamendi, PFF's acting secretary-general, said eight provincial football associations have already confirmed their hosting for this regional event. Those that confirmed their hosting were Tarlac, Quezon, Legazpi/Albay, Negros Oriental, Iligan/Lanao del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur/Pagadian, Butuan/Agusan del Norte and South Cotabato.

Pabs Araneta is the commissioner for the tournament backed by PFF sponsor-partners Adidas, Red Ribbon Bakeshop, SuperFerry and Petron.

Celtics near Atlantic crown

PHILADELPHIA—Paul Pierce scored 27 points, including the go-ahead basket in the final minute, and Boston moved closer toward clinching the Atlantic Division title with a 105-98 victory over second-place Philadelphia on Tuesday.

Allen Iverson scored 28 points and Kyle Korver added 17 for the 76ers, who fell three games behind Boston with five games remaining.

"This was the biggest game to date," said Pierce, who had 13 rebounds. "We had a lot on the line. We're our own worst enemy right now. It's in our hands to take."

Philadelphia holds the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference, one game behind Cleveland and one game ahead of New Jersey.

Antoine Walker had 18 points for Boston, which saw a 5 1/2-game lead in the division slip to two games since March 19.

Back in the lineup after missing one game with two sprained thumbs, Iverson was 9-for-21 from the field and had 11 assists.

Chris Webber, returning after missing five games with a sprained left shoulder, finished with eight points and seven rebounds.

"I wanted to come back and be here for a big game," Webber said. "Something's got to change. Hopefully, it will get better soon."

In New York, Rafer Alston banked in a 3-pointer to start a 13-0 run midway through the fourth quarter, and the Toronto Raptors sent the Knicks to its 10th loss in 11 games via a 105-93 come-from-behind victory.

Chris Bosh scored 29 points and Jalen Rose added 25 for the Raptors, who trailed by as many as 19 points. The 13-0 run gave Toronto a 91-85 lead.

Stephon Marbury scored all 22 of his points in the second half, and Maurice Taylor added 17 for the Knicks.

In San Antonio, Manu Ginobili scored 30 points in 34 minutes and Nazr Mohammed added 14 rebounds—12 in the first half—as the Spurs beat the Portland Trail Blazers to clinch the Southwest Division title.

It's the fourth division title in the past five years for the Spurs.

Portland has lost 15 of its last 16 games and 21 of its past 23. The Trail Blazers are 3-19 under coach Kevin Pritchard who replaced Maurice Cheeks on March 2.

The Spurs have won five of six games. They are 8-4 without Tim Duncan, who sprained his right ankle and hasn't played since March 20.

Darius Miles led the Trail Blazers with 18 points in 19 minutes.

In Phoenix, Amare Stoudemire scored 27 points, including making 15 of 16 free throws, and the Suns dominated the final quarter to crush New Orleans, 99-85.

Jim Jackson, starting in place of injured Quentin Richardson and coming off a season-high 25 points against the Los Angeles Lakers on Monday night, was 6-of-7 from 3-point range and scored 20 points.

Shawn Marion added 18 points and 17 rebounds for the Suns, who at 59-19 stayed one game ahead of San Antonio for the best record in the NBA and home-court advantage throughout the playoffs.

The 59 victories ties the Suns' second-best total in franchise history, accomplished in 1994-95. The victory made Phoenix only the fourth team in NBA history to accomplish a 30-game turnaround from the previous season.

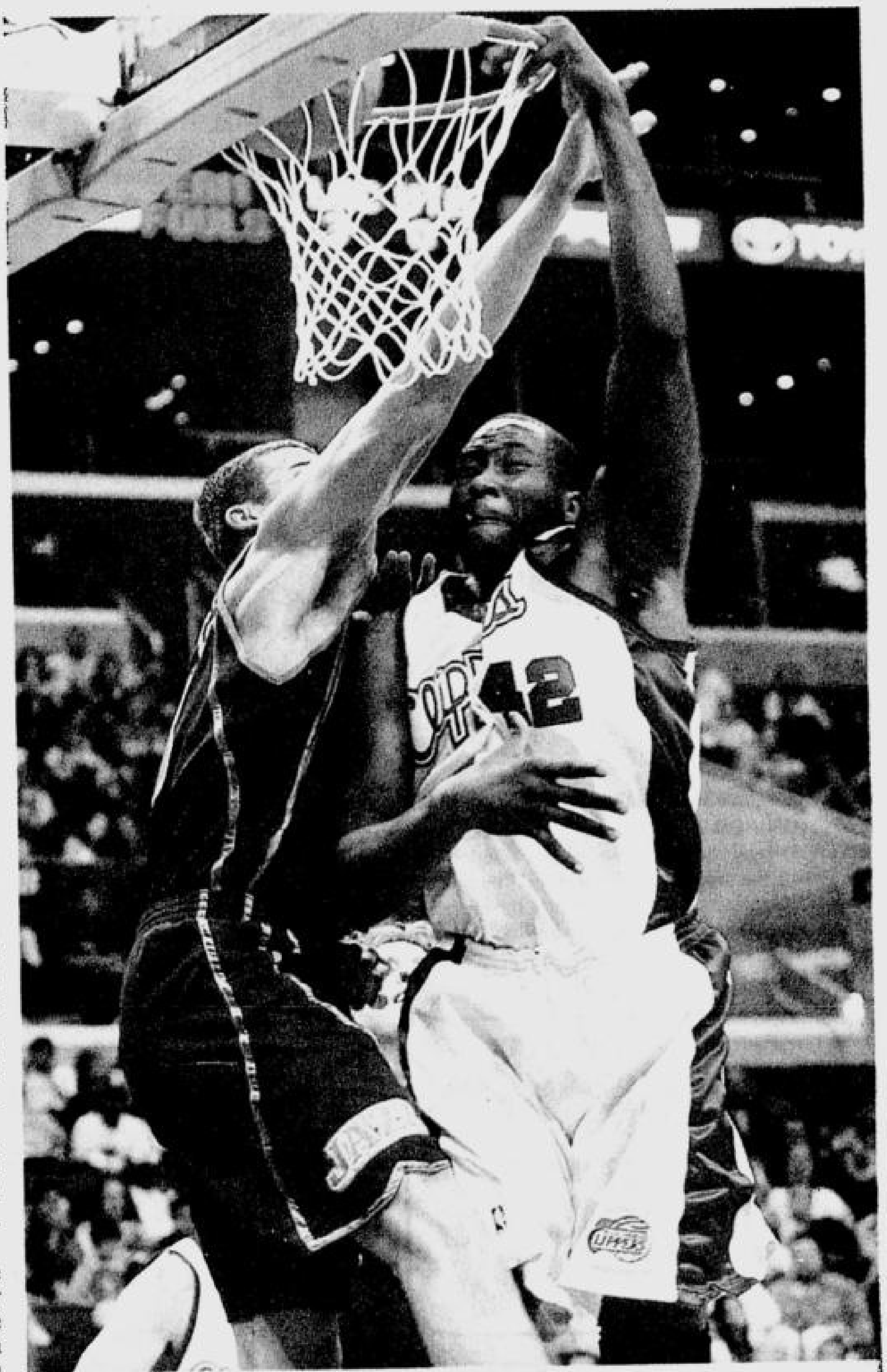
J.R. Smith scored 23 points for New Orleans, while Dan Dickau added 13 and Lee Nailon had 10.

In Los Angeles, Elton Brand had 25 points and 10 rebounds and Marko Jaric added 20 points for the Clippers, who beat Utah for only the fifth time in the last 27 meetings, 94-85.

Shaun Livingston had 15 points and 10 assists, the first double-double in 26 NBA games for the Clippers' injury-plagued rookie point guard.

Los Angeles assistant coach Jim Eyen ran the team while Mike Dunleavy was in New York on an indefinite leave of absence, due to a medical emergency involving his seriously ill father.

Matt Harpring had 18 points for the Jazz, who are missing the playoffs for the second straight year. They have lost 16 of their last 20 and are 24-53 in finishing up their first losing season since 1982-83. *AP*


CLIPPERS forward Elton Brand (right) dunks over Utah's Kris Humphries. AP

Federer's target: French Open

MONACO—He has four Grand Slams to his name, he's on a run of 49 victories in his last 50 matches and has already collected 27 career titles, but the French Open still remains a mystery for Roger Federer.

The world No. 1's record at Roland Garros, recognized as the toughest of the four Slams to win, is an embarrassment for a player who is shattering records and raising the standards of the game.

In six visits to the French capital, his best performance remains a run to the quarterfinals in 2001 and last year his hopes vanished in the third round when he came up against triple champion Gustavo Kuerten.

In 2005, the 23-year-old Federer is doing things differently by appearing at the Monte Carlo Masters for the first time in three years.

On Tuesday, he kicked off his clay court season with a 6-3, 6-1 demolition of Britain's Greg Rusedski, his first match on the surface since that shattering loss to Kuerten in Paris ten months ago.

"I'm happy I came here but I feel I can make the transition quite comfortably from hard courts," said Federer.

"The way I move on clay is very natural for me and you just have to be more patient mentally and physically. You just need to get matches to get used to it."

Federer insists that the pursuit of records—like John McEnroe's mark of an 83-3 winning season—will not distract him from his goal of finally cracking the French Open code.

"It's not something I'm aiming for, I'm more concerned about each and every week, match and tournament," said Federer.

"Of course, I am surprised at the way I have started the season (33-1) and after a start like this everyone starts wondering: 'Who in the world is going to beat him?'

"But sometimes it happens very quickly, so I have to make sure I'm well focused." *AFP*

Tayao, Genito rule S'Woods Invitational

AHBEE Tayao and Paul Genito assembled a net of 266 to capture the overall championship in the annual member-guest Invitational tournament held at the Masters and Legends courses of the Manila Southwoods Golf and Country Club.

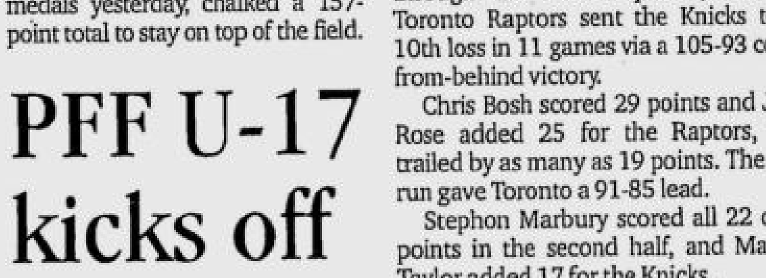
Marty Ilagan and Louie Dacudao, on the other hand, were awarded the low gross championship trophy to share honors with Tayao and Genito in the four-day, two-man team competition presented by Mitsubishi Motors, Diamond Motors, Royal Caribbean International, Korean Air, El Nido Resorts and Wilson Sports.

Club member Jun Abut won a brand new Mitsubishi Lancer GLX during the raffle that highlighted the awards ceremony. The car, originally staked as a hole-in-one gem, was raffled since no one from the field of 600 made an ace.

"The Board of Directors congratulates the club management and staff for a well-staged event. And a million thanks too to the sponsors for making it a more exciting experience," said Southwoods chair Robert John Sobrepeña.

Four other lucky players went home happy after winning the eight-day/seven-night Royal Caribbean Mexican Riviera cruise for two with Korean Air business class tickets, a four-day/three night El Nido vacation package and a complete Wilson golf set.

Turf Company-Club Car, Globe and Nestlé Phils. were the major sponsors while Britesmile, Citibank, CJH Dev. Co., CJH Manor, Club Leisure, Evergreen, Miramar Tuna Belly, MRT, Pan de Manila, Phil. Wine Merchants, Saud Beach Resort, Splash Island, TMS Shipping and Vein Care were minor backers.



PHILIPPINE OPEN: Benny Gopez (3rd from right), NGAP President & 89th Open Executive Committee chair shakes hands with Club Malarayat chair & president Arch. Antonio Turalba Sr. (3rd from left) in the contract signing held last April 8, 2005 between the NGAP and Club Malarayat as host venue of the 89th Philippine Open slated May 19-22, 2005. There to witness the event are: (L-R) Patrick Young of the Asian Tour, NGAP secretary general V/Adm. Luisito Fernandez, NGAP treasurer Alice Andrada, the honorable Fidel V. Ramos, Malarayat Golf director Mike Carr, Ogie Manalo & Malarayat GM Arch. Antonio Turalba Jr.

Tiger's new era arrives

AUGUSTA, Georgia—All the images at the Masters paint a picture of Tiger Woods returning to the pinnacle of golf.

A shot that ranks among the most amazing ever at Augusta National. The face bursting with raw emotion when the winning putt dropped on the 18th hole. His fist punching the air with an uppercut, his roar drowned out by a delirious gallery. The red shirt beneath a green jacket.

Woods' fourth Masters win last weekend put him back on track to go after Jack Nicklaus' record of 18 majors. Woods has nine majors, tied with Ben Hogan and Gary Player, and he is still only 29.

But there was something different about this victory.

Woods no longer looked invincible with a final-round lead in a major, spitting up three shots on the final nine holes. No one feared him, least of all Chris DiMarco, who outplayed Woods in every aspect of the game except when it mattered—with a putter in his hand.

Having gone nearly three years without a major while retooling his swing, it appears that this might be the start of a new era for Woods. If that's the case, it might be different in one area.

Nothing seems to come easily.

Woods won for the third time this year, and none of the finishes were particularly inspiring.

He had a two-shot lead over DiMarco until making bogeys on the last two holes.

The old Tiger would not have given his opponents any hope.

The new Tiger keeps everyone guessing to the end.

"At least I didn't lose it on the last hole," Woods said. "I got into a playoff, and then I hit two of the best golf shots I had hit all week."

"I went out and shot 68 around here on Sunday, which is a very good round," DiMarco said. "And 12 under is usually good enough to win. I just was playing against Tiger Woods." *AP*

Legendary Elma eyes SEAG shot

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THERE'S a familiar face amid the frenetic activities at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex lately. That of the legendary Elma Muros-Posadas.

Just when everybody thought she has ridden into the sunset, the 37-year-old mother of two has started training regularly for two months now, hoping to nail at least one slot in the national team for the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

"If they don't watch out, I just might steal a slot from these young bunch," said a confident Muros-Posadas during one of her afternoon workouts at the RMSC. "Right now I'm just trying to keep in shape and see how I can improve further."

Her husband-coach Jojo Posadas reported that Elma has been showing great improvement despite the "semi-formal training." She has been clocking 12.4 seconds in the century dash, far from the SEAG gold mark but maybe good enough for the relays.

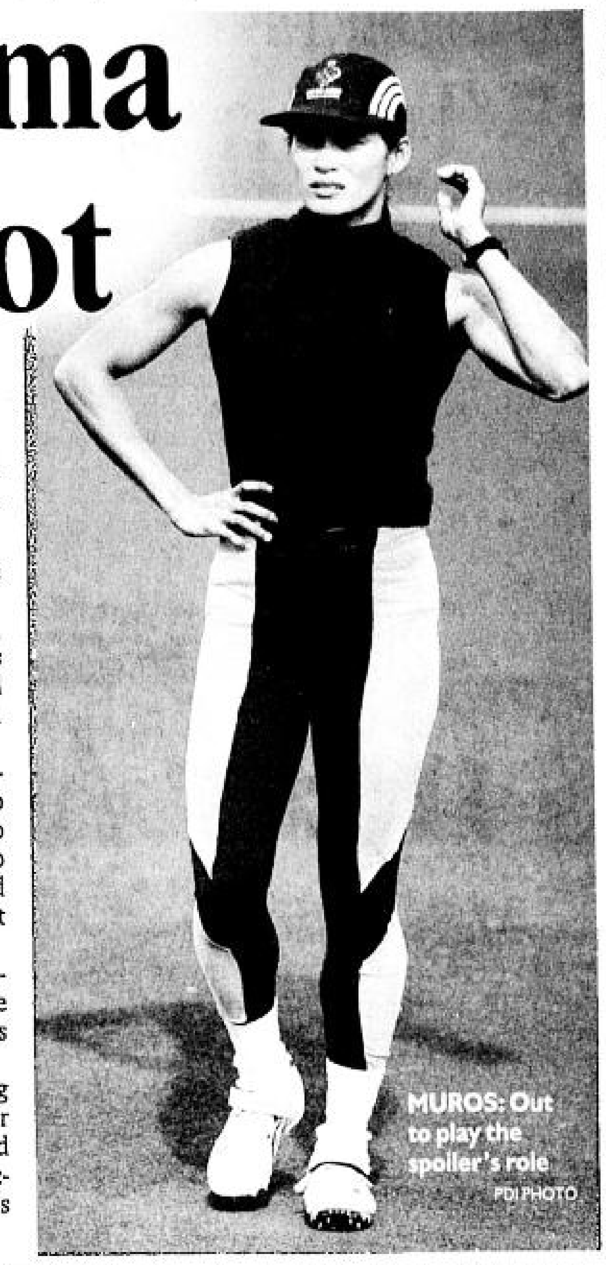
"I have lost 10 pounds already," said Muros-Posadas in Filipino. "The good thing here is that I don't feel any pressure to perform well because I'll just be playing a spoiler role."

She is eyeing a slot in heptathlon, 4X100, and shot put in the Games where she has a collection of 17 gold medals, including the 1981 and 1991 editions both held here.

If she, indeed, makes it to the national team, Muros-Posadas is certain to provide glitter to the RP tracksters, who have been the winningest the past two SEA Games. This year, the track and field bunch is hoping to scoop at least 15 of the 45 gold medals at stake.

Her fellow golden girl Lydia De Vega-Mercado has been working with the technical staff, while Isidro del Prado is currently a national coach.

"I just want to prove one more thing for myself as well as try to give honor to the country one last time," said Muros-Posadas, who will also see action in the national open slated this weekend.



MUROS: Out to play the spoiler's role

PDI PHOTO

37 age-groupers join nat'l swim team to Brunei

LED by 12-year-old sensations Banjo Borja and Denjylie Cordero, 37 age-group swimmers made it to the national team that will see action in the 29th Southeast Asian Age-Group Championships set June 3 to 5 in Brunei.

Philippine Amateur Swimming Association president Mark Joseph yesterday said the bunch emerged as the finest among the hundreds who competed in the national tryouts which he conducted last week at the Panaad Sports Complex in Bacolod City.

"It was a success. Not only did hundreds of swimmers from around the country get to compete against each other for the first time in a year, but the times they turned in were impressive," said Joseph.

Borja and Cordero surprised Joseph as they have muscled their way into the national junior training pool.

The Pasa chief said they "softened up" their criteria to accommodate more swimmers who are wanting in experience, especially in international competitions. They allowed entry to the top two winners of every event provided that they met at least the sixth-place time of the last SEA meet held in Vietnam.

Passing the test in the 15-17 years old boys are Ryan Arabejo, Ferdinand Frigillan, Martin Parenas, Gerard Bordado, Ernest Dee, Mark Tano, Jan Michael Chiu, Kendrick Uy and Matthew Tano.

In the girls side of the same bracket, Marichi Gandionco, Chrizel Lagunday, Liane Marquez, Heidi Ong and Isabela Arabejo made it.

Nikita Dacera, Bryle Zapanta, Jasper Ong, Roberto Justiniani, Miggy Villanueva are in the 13-14 boys, while Marielle Infantado, Edzen Dinglasan, Krestia Lacson, Louise Sarmiento, Marvie Borja, Nikki Balinas made the girls category.

Competing in the boys 11-12 division are Johanssen Aguilar, John Solon, Wilfredo Sunglao, and of course, Borja, while in the girls are Whitney Dee, Carmina Quilala, Erika Visitacion, Patricia Malabanan, Patricia Yam, Celina Gonzales, Nicole Ilustre and Cordero.

Those who will perform well in the Brunei meet are likely to join the national team who will have an extensive training in China next month. *Marc Anthony Reyes*

Valley's Tuason Cup gets going today

CEREMONIAL SERVE: (From left) Epson Cup 2 tournament chair Edwin Tarriela, Pasig City Rep. Robert "Dodot" Jaworski Jr., Epson marketing manager Randy Kanapi and Philippine Badminton Association president Ming Ramos do the ceremonial serve of the tournament. The semifinals of Epson Cup 2 will begin tomorrow at the Greenhills Baminton Center.

PRIZES worth more than P2 million are at stake in the 6th Don Celso Tuason & Valley Founders Memorial Cup, the member-guest tournament of the Valley Golf and Country Club in Antipolo, blasting off today.

No less than 700 players are taking a crack at the many prizes up for grabs topped by a Chevrolet Aveo and a Nissan Sentra which will be driven home by players who score aces on designated holes of the all-weather South course of Valley.

Smart Communications is the presenter of the event with Arms Corp. and Pacsports as major sponsors.

Premium sponsors are DHL/Wide Wide World Express, GMA 7, Wyeth Nutritionals, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Enriquez Security Services, GG&A Club Shares, Rudy Project, Makati Skyline, Nescafe Gold, Oriental Assurance Corp., Gakken Phils., Immuvit-Pascual Lab, Taisho Pharmaceuticals-Lipovitan, Caltex, Pisanti Golf, ABS-CBN, Sara Lee Phils., Glaxo Smithkline, Sunbolt Sports Drink and Splash Corp.

Aside from the cars donated by GM Autoworld and Nissan Commonwealth, Armscor Pistols and P100,000 cash from South Sea Surety&Insurance Co. are also up for grabs for holes-in-one.

The big field led by club president Joe Feliciano and the rest of the members of the Valley's board of directors will be playing two different formats with best-ball designed for the South course and aggregate at the Executive course.

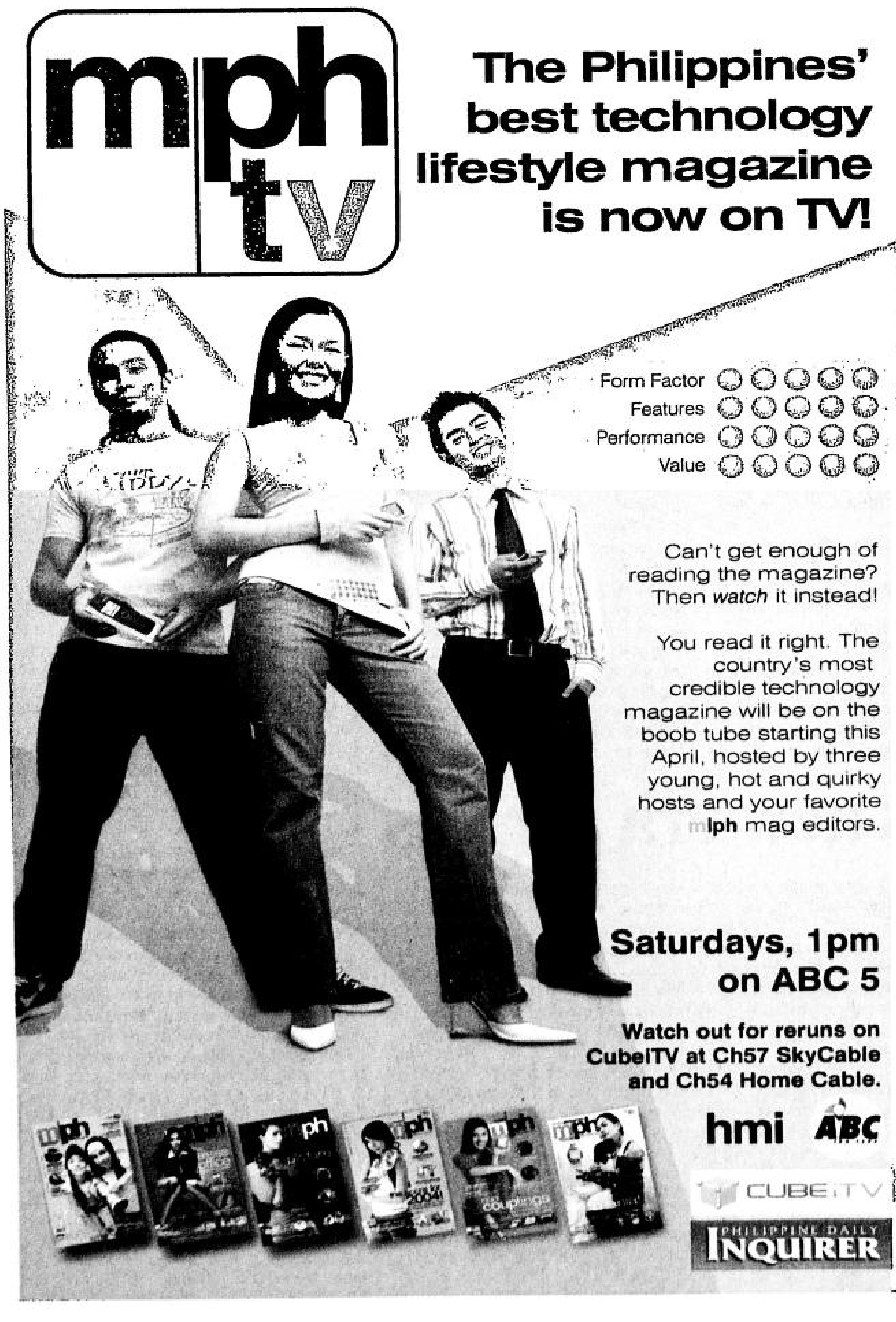
BOLO Tuason, son of Don Carlos, hits the ceremonial drive.

Maca loses

CHUMPORN, Thailand—Filipino Jess Maca fought a great tactical fight, but his efforts were not enough as he was beaten on 12-round unanimous decision by World Boxing Organization Asia Pacific champ Terdsak Jandaeng on April 11 at the Leamson Beach here, some nine hours from Bangkok.

Maca started hot, battling Terdsak in a give-and-take affair, but soon found himself at the receiving end of powerful body shots as the latter beat him on score of 117-111, 117-111, 118-110.

He's big and powerful," said Maca. "I couldn't counter because I was watching for his next punch." Maca, the former OPBF 118-lb champ, saw action in a 126-lb featherweight fight. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*



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Espinosa rediscovers family

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

(Conclusion)

AS PROMISED, here's the last part of the never-ending saga of Luisito Espinosa. As I said, the article, written by Cicero A. Estrella for the March 8 issue of the San Francisco Chronicle, was sent to me by Noel Rivera, Hermie's super intelligent son based in San Francisco, CA.

***

DIO Espinosa and Hermie Rivera both worked for Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos in the early '80s, Espinosa on the household staff and Rivera in the media affairs office. Dio Espinosa secured a job for his teenage son sparring with the presidential guards, and that was where Rivera first saw Espinosa's potential.

Rivera agreed to manage the youngster and guided him to a 26-6 record and the bantamweight championship over seven years. But they parted ways after Espinosa lost his belt to Israel Contreras in 1991. Espinosa, who was receiving advice from new bride Mariecherie, fired Rivera over differences on where the boxer's career was headed. Espinosa lost touch with the rest of the Rivera clan.

Espinosa acknowledges he made mistakes. He went through five managers after Rivera, with varying results. He places much of the blame for his recent outings to infighting within his last camp. He said his manager and trainer did not get along, and he was often caught in the cross fire of the arguments. As a result, he was unable to give full attention to his training, and the losses piled up.

Noel Rivera, in the meantime, continued to pay attention to his friend's career from a distance. Noel Rivera does not believe his friend is washed up. He agreed with many observers that Espinosa was robbed by the decision that gave the featherweight title to Cesar Soto in 1999. He also concurred that Espinosa was ill-prepared for his matches against Guty Espadas (technical decision, 11th round) and Sanchez.

The friends, after seeing each other just once in 10 years, reunited in April last year after the management of a sports complex in the Philippines asked the Riveras to check Espinosa's availability for endorsements. Noel Rivera relayed the complex's interest to Espinosa and then invited his buddy to watch a fight on pay-per-view at his Newark home.

The differences that divided Espinosa and the Riveras disappeared as they watched the fight. They made a bet on the result, goofed around a bit and became reacquainted. Discussions over the following days resulted in Espinosa hiring Noel Rivera as his manager. Rivera, a respiratory technician at Fremont's Washington Township Hospital, had never managed before.

"When Noel and I started calling each other, I knew I could trust him," said Espinosa.

"We grew up together," said Rivera, 35. "We slept in the same room. He even tried to teach me how to box, but it just wasn't in my genes."

But managing apparently is. Rivera found a promoter in I-Box Promotions, found training facilities in Daly City and San Francisco, found a trainer and an opponent in 33-year-old John Michael Johnson. The fight is scheduled for April 14 in Temecula (Riverside County).

Johnson (30-7-0), the WBC's No. 10 featherweight contender, recently scored a first-round knockout of Sanchez, the boxer who dealt Espinosa his last defeat.

"I ask Louie what he thinks about John Michael Johnson," said Rivera. "He says, 'Nothing. I've fought tougher guys than him.'"

Espinosa knows the opinion on his abilities are mixed. He has heard the whispers going around that, at 34 his time is running out, if not already expired.

But Espinosa downplays the age factor. There is nary an ounce of fat on his 5-foot-6 1/2-inch frame. He does not smoke, nor does he drink, despite the many temptations thrown his way as a bartender.

"He keeps himself really fit," said his trainer, Danovis Pooler. "He is incredibly skilled still. He's extremely fast and packs a lot of power."

So Espinosa is training again. He is on the comeback trail, just as hundreds of other boxers before him had been. As Hermie Rivera said, "There is no boxer who wants to retire. They always think they still have what it takes."

Espinosa says he is not coming back for the money. He has some investments in the Philippines, and he and his wife are doing fine financially. There is a hunger, though, that remains unfed, a hunger that has grown with each of his last three defeats.

Even as Espinosa thinks about what could be again, Noel Rivera, like any good manager, continues to trumpet the past feats of his boxer. Since 1890, he says, six other boxers have won both the bantamweight and featherweight titles, and all six are members of the International Boxing Hall of Fame. There is no reason, he says, that Espinosa should not follow them.

Espinosa is not thinking that far ahead. He believes his story is far from complete. The latest chapter includes the reunion of his two families.

"I still have something left," he said, almost in a whisper, as he tapped his left chest with a closed fist.

"Happy birthday today to Gov. Valera of Abra! Many happy returns, Gov!"

Couch potatoes rule

- **Drama still most popular type of show everywhere**
- **Japanese remain the world's top TV watchers**
- **American series, except 'Friends,' lose out in Europe**

CANNES, France—The TV set continued to strengthen its hold over daily life in 2004 as television viewers worldwide spent more time on average in front of the box on all the continents except Asia, according to figures released on Monday.

TV fiction, or drama, proved once again to be the world's most popular type of show, grabbing a 46 percent share. But within the TV fiction genre, movies lost ground to the more popular drama series programs, and accounted for just 25 percent of the most popular fiction programs.

The annual Eurodata TV Worldwide study, released during this week's "MIPTV featuring MILIA" international audiovisual trade show, was based on statistics from 73 countries or regions, 2.7 billion viewers and more than 1,200 channels (double the number of channels included in last year's study).

The Japanese remained the world's top TV watchers, with a viewing time of five hours and one minute recorded in Kanto, the country's most densely populated area where both Tokyo and Yokohama are located. This was just one minute more than last year but well ahead of the United States where the time that viewers spent glued to their screens was four hours and 46 minutes.

It was a different story in China, where the average amount of time spent tuning into television was five minutes less than last year. This was the largest drop amongst the key countries highlighted by the study.

When measured by region, the Asia-Pacific region dropped into last place this year from third position in 2004, registering an average daily viewing time of two hours and 33 minutes, down six minutes from last year.

This was 30 minutes below the world average of three hours and three minutes when India is included in the statistics, and 34 minutes less excluding data from India.

Commenting on the fall in the average Asia-Pacific daily viewing times, Jacques Braun, international director at French-based Médiamétrie, which created the annual survey, noted that this year's survey included an additional 20 cities in India. Whilst these urban centers are very populous, the average viewing in these cities is below that of the six cities included in the 2004 survey, he explained.

North America as a region continued to capture the top billing, adding an extra two minutes to total an average four hours and 24 minutes viewing per individual— one hour and 21 minutes more than the world average, Eurodata TV Worldwide said in a press release.

Europe once again was runner-up with three hours and 35 minutes. This year it was followed by the Middle East (three hours and 18 minutes), Latin America (three hours and 16 minutes) and South Africa (three hours and nine minutes), the only African country included in the survey.

On the content front, whilst fiction continued to be tops, cinema is suffering from the growth in popularity of drama series.

American series fell out of favor in Europe last year and only the hugely popular "Friends" series remains in the top program charts in Italian-speaking Switzerland.

The big cinema successes in TV throughout the world, however, remained American productions and the big winners last year were "Shrek" and "Titanic." Entertainment increased its popularity and accounted for more than a third of the programmes preferred by viewers worldwide.

But the appetite for new reality format shows looks as if it may be finally falling off although the pioneering reality TV formats such as "Big Brother" and "Idols" continue to figure amongst the most popular programmes. The new format achieving the best ratings was "The Apprentice", which pulled in more than 28 million viewers.

The biggest entertainment hits of 2004 were special event shows, which accounted for 13 percent of entertainment's 36 percent market share, 9 percent for reality shows, 5 percent for game shows, 4 percent for variety shows, 2 percent for comedy and just one percent for talk shows.

The appetite for news programs increased in 2004, mostly due to major international events including Iraq and the US presidential elections.

2004 will also go down as a great vintage for sports events with the Athens Olympics, the European Football Championships and qualifying rounds for the 2006 Football World Cup to name but a few.

A closer look at the regions also shows that whilst Western European viewers spent on average four more minutes per day in front of their televisions, their Eastern neighbors were the bigger TV addicts, spending three hours and 43 minutes in front of their screens.

TV consumption in the Middle East was also higher with the average daily viewing time in Lebanon and Israel up three minutes at three hours and 18 minutes.

South Africa also stood out from the crowd. After rising sharply in 2000, viewing time in the country increased even further in 2004 to total three hours and nine minutes a day.

AFP

KRISTANNA Loken

Casting Brunhild in 'Nibelung'

KRISTANNA Loken was just coming off "Terminator 3" and was "very hot," remembers Konstantin Thoeren, producer of the forthcoming epic fantasy, "Ring of the Nibelung."

Uli Edel, director, agrees. "I found her very powerful. She was a threat even to ["Terminator 3" co-star] Arnold Schwarzenegger."

So when it came time to cast one of the three lead roles in "Nibelung," there was no doubt in their mind.

"I knew I had the right woman," Edel says. "The casting of Brunhild was the most challenging. She's the great warrior and Queen of Iceland. I needed someone beautiful and believable, a strong woman whom no man can defeat."

J.R.R. Tolkien himself said the Nibelungen saga was an inspiration for his "Lord of the Rings" trilogy. "It's true," says executive producer Tim Halkin. "If you dig deep around the roots of Tolkien's story, you will find similarities to the Nibelung saga.

Marlow de Mardt describes the movie from his viewpoint as line producer: "Period piece, castles and interiors set in the Dark Ages, scripted locations, a large amount of visual effects, special effects, stunts. Everything needed to be designed, built and manufactured, from costumes and hairpieces to furniture and props. I think we underestimated what it would take because it developed into something much bigger—probably the largest independent film ever to be made in South Africa!"

Uproar over celebrity sex videos escalates

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

FOR months now, we have been criticizing our leading TV networks for featuring celebrity sex videos on their daytime show biz talk shows.

Even when the images are blurred or masked, viewers are still seduced into maliciously "filling in the blanks," so to speak. As a result, a mangy spirit of collective voyeurism has taken over the viewing nation, and we are the poorer for it.

We have also noted that the "exposes" related to the sex videos have sometimes been punitive, in the sense that the channels love exposing the incriminating footage of stars of rival networks.

Recently, ABS-CBN officially complained to the MTRCB and a talent managers' group about GMA-7's showing of a sex video allegedly involving ABS-CBN talent **Piolo Pascual**. While the channel was entitled to its fury, some observers criticized it for its subjective anger, and recalled instances when ABS-CBN had also exposed erotic footage involving GMA-7 contract talents.

So, *all* of our TV channels have to rein in their desire to generate controversy, and consequently high ratings, by featuring stars' sexy videos in daytime shows. Many children and families are watching, and they shouldn't be assaulted by such sleazy footage.

We wonder why parents and educators haven't been more vocal in their opposition to this nefarious industry practice. Do they feel that they are powerless in curtailing the reprehensible practices of the "all-powerful" TV industry?

If so, they are grievously wrong. They should remind themselves that "TV power" is all about numbers and ratings, and it's *the viewing public* that has those numbers. If enough viewers decide not to watch a show they regard as reprehensible, that's the kiss of death for that program.

So, concerned viewers have to speak and act together in order to be heard, and heeded. For this to happen, however, they should agree that television is an important medium that's worthy of their most serious attention.

All too often, viewers think TV is practically invisible, and therefore harmless, so they don't worry about it, and consequently allow the medium to do its worst.

Viewers should also remind themselves that TV channels use airwaves that are owned by the government. In fact, network owners have to get government franchises to operate, and they secure those franchises only after they promise to provide responsible and balanced programming.

Sex videos on TV are obviously *not* responsible programming, so guilty networks can be accused of not living up to the terms specified in their franchises, and permission to operate can therefore be revoked by the government.

So, who's powerless now?

Movies on TV

ON CINEMAX, today at 12 noon, "Ghost." 5:30 p.m., "Music from Another Room." April 15 at 6:30 a.m., "Clear and Present Danger." 2:15 p.m., "Torn Curtain." 2:45 a.m., "Perdita Durango."

Feedback

FROM **Ely R. Gordon** of Makati City: "Thank you for your helpful listing of good films to watch on cable TV. You should make this a regular feature, because it will go a long way in helping us develop our appreciation for outstanding movies. What about the good films for the second half of April?"

NUT: Here's a partial listing of Cinemax channel treats:

Tomorrow at 2:15 p.m., "Torn Curtain." **Alfred Hitchcock** directs **Paul Newman** and **Julie Andrews**. A double agent has to contend with enemies on both sides of the political fence, as well as the woman he loves. She soon discovers that, although he defected to East Germany, he's no traitor, but is acting as a secret undercover agent.

April 16 at 9 p.m., "Flatliners." A group of medical students explore the realm of near-death experiences, but their experiment goes awry. Starring **Kiefer Sutherland, Julia Roberts** and **Kevin Bacon**.

April 17 at 9 a.m., "Against the Wall." A tough-as-nails reenactment of the 1971 Attica prison riots that's full of political and sociological implications. This TV film won an Emmy for its director, **John Frankenheimer**.

At 10:55 p.m., "Truman." **Gary Sinise** plays US president Harold Truman in this acclaimed TV biopic.

April 18 at 9 a.m., "Music from Another Room." When a woman went into emergency labor, 5-year-old Danny helped deliver her baby, later named Anna. Twenty-five years later, the now grown-up Danny (**Jude Law**) returns to marry Anna (**Gretchen Mol**). But he discovers that she has a rich boyfriend, and tries to convince her of their future together.

At 4:15 p.m., "Jason and the Argonauts." The Greek legend comes alive in this 1963 classic. On a quest for the fabled Golden Fleece, Jason, son of the King of Thessaly, sails to the land of Colchis and faces fighting skeletons, vengeful gods, strange monsters, and the beautiful princess, Medea.

Fishing tournament

888 FISHING Place, a fishing restaurant and bar on Covelandia Rd., Binakayan, Kawit, Cavite, will hold a fishing tournament, "1st Fishing Tourney at the Pond," on May 1. Anglers from Manila, Parañaque, Las Piñas and Cavite are invited to participate. Call (046) 434-0803.

Robert and Isay

BRILLIANT theater couple **Robert Seña** and **Isay Alvarez** light up Merk's at Greenbelt 3 with a unique show titled "Love You, Hate You, Love You." Performances are on tonight, and then again on April 21 and 28.

Mae sings during Happy Hour, and The Company's **Ruben Laurente** performs from 8 to 9:15 p.m., before Robert and Isay's show.

Beneficiaries of the presentation are St. Joseph Parish in Cabalantian, Bacolor, Pampanga (today's show), San Lorenzo Ruiz charity and the Consuelo "Chito" Madrigal Foundation (April 21), and the All for Jesus Foundation (April 28). Call 757-4720

MTV band competition in Cebu

"MTV Hits Cebu" on May 14 at the SM City Cebu Parking Lot with Parokya ni Edgar, Kitchie Nadal and the southern city's Urbandub.

The event features a band competition where six groups will vie for the grand prize of P50,000 and an all-expense paid trip to Manila for special appearances on MTV.

The competition is open to all unsigned bands (of any musical genre) from Cebu.

Participating bands should consist of six members maximum, ages 18 and above. Interested parties should prepare an audio or video demo tape or CD with one original composition and one cover song.

Send to "MTV Hits Cebu Band Competition," MTV Studios, Unit C, The Fort Entertainment Center, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig, Metro Manila 1634. Deadline for submission of entries is May 1.

For details, call (02) 889-9251 in Manila or (032) 234-0048 in Cebu.

SHOW TIME

Tonight

King stars in "King on Top of the World" repeat at **Music Museum**, 9 p.m. Call 721-6726.

The Cascades at **Hard Rock Café**, featuring **Ramon Jacinto & Friends** and **The Elderly Brothers**. Call 911-5555.

Jonathan Badon at **Funnside** Timog Avenue, Quezon City.

Nyoy Volante w/ Mannos at **Suburbia** in Malate.

8 Track at the **Tavern on the Square** in Greenbelt 2 Makati.

Robert Seña and **Isay Alvarez** in a benefit show, "Love You, Hate You, Love You," at **Merk's**

Sheryn Regis at **Toilet Humor** in Malate.

8 Track at Tavern on the Square in Greenbelt 2 Makati.

Tomorrow

Cascades at the **Araneta Coliseum** with **Willie Nepomuceno**. Call 911-5555

Fat Session at the **Tavern on the Square** in Greenbelt 2 Makati.

The Men Of Blue Blood (MOBB) at **Funnside**, Timog Ave., QC; 8 p.m.

Shanice Michael at Hyatt's **Calesa Bar**; 9:30 p.m.

Essence Band at The Linden Suite's **Monsoon Restaurant** in Ortigas.

Blue Ketchup at **Taste Buds, Robinsons Place** Manila, 7 p.m.

Wally Gonzales and Friends, Sugarfree, True Faith, Pido with Take One and **Kearney Street** back-to-back at **19 East Music Hall**. Call 837-6903.

Acoustic Jive at **Merk's**.

FREESTYLE

RIVERMAYA

April 16

Jeremiah at **Starmall Edsa**, 4 p.m.

Rivermaya and **Kitchie Nadal** at the **Araneta Coliseum** with newcomers **Spongecola** and **Juana** as guests. Call 911-5555.

Passage Band at **Metropolis Star Alabang**, 8 p.m.

Wiseguys at the **Tavern on the Square** in Greenbelt 2 Makati.

The **Moonstrucks** at **Funnside**, Timog Ave., QC

Aretha and the Souled Out Band at Merk's.

April 17

Faith Cuneta at **Starmall Edsa**, 4 p.m.

"StarStruck Superstar" concert series featuring **Yasmien Kurdi** at **Enchanted Kingdom, 7 p.m.**

Rachelle Ann Go at **Robinsons Pioneer.**

Highway 69 at **Hard Rock Cafe.**

April 18

Keystone Band at **Suburbia** in Malate.

Judith Banal with Evolution at **19 East Music Hall**. Call 837-6903.

Freestyle at **Tavern on the Squarein** Greenbelt 2 Makati.

Main Avenue at **Hard Rock Cafe**.

Bernie Uy at **Merk's**.

April 19

Shanice Michael at the **Syncopado Piano Bar and Resto** in Malate.

Ang4Gettables at the **Tavern on the Square** in Greenbelt 2 Makati.

Dio Marco, The Moonstrucks, Michelle de Guzman, Joy Viado and other surprise guest artists will have a fund-raising show for the eye operation of Vangie Lumanog at **Funnside**.

Freeverse at **Suburbia** in Malate, Tuesdays.

M.Y.M.P. at **19 East Music Hall**. Call 837-6903.

April 20

Side A at the **Tavern on the Square** in Greenbelt 2 Makati.

K24/7 at **Suburbia** in Malate.

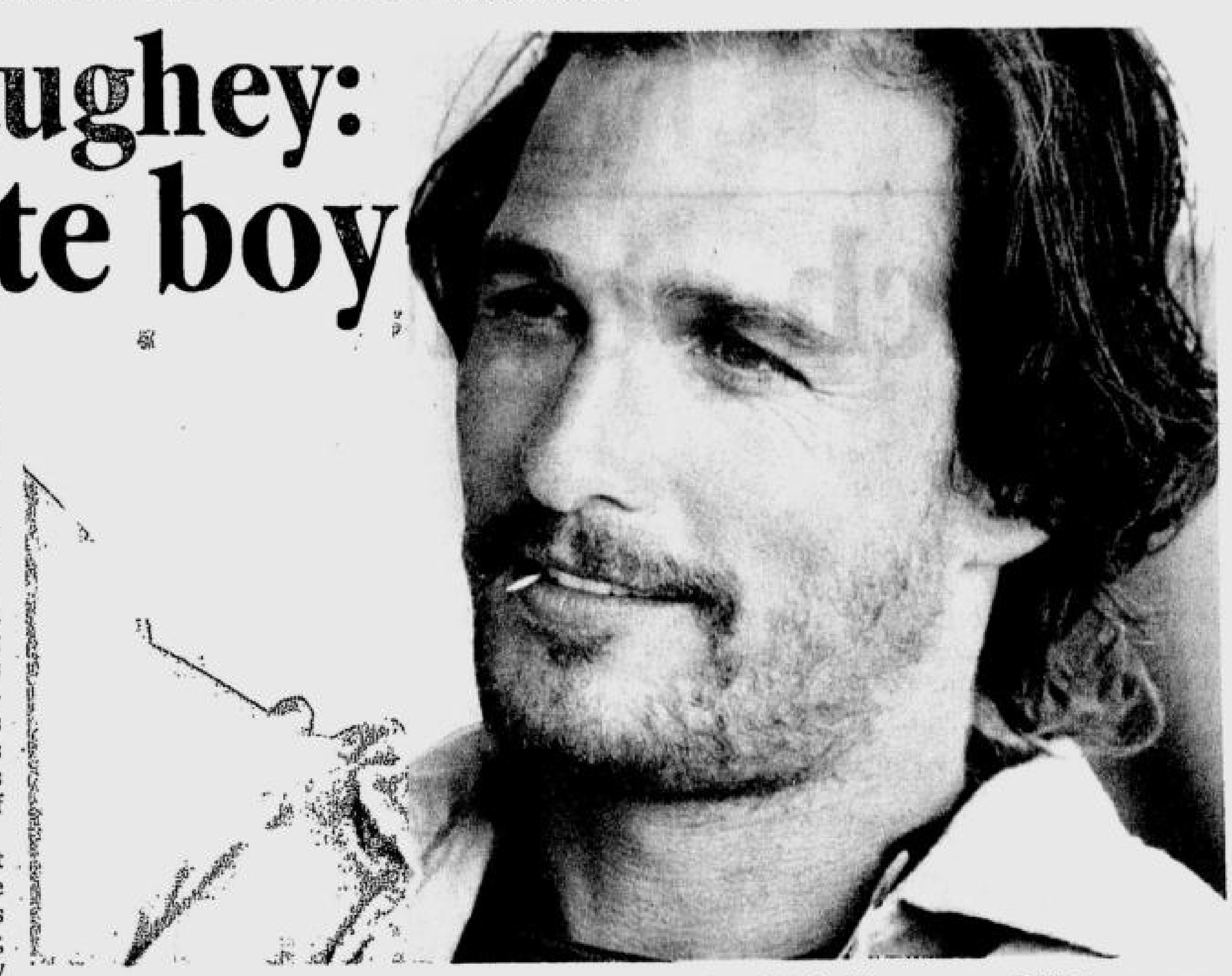
Toy Symphony at **19 East Music Hall**. Call 837-6903.

April 21

Robert Seña and **Isay Alvarez** in "Love You, Hate You, Love You," at **Merk's**.

Nyoy Volante w/ Mannos at **Suburbia** in Malate.

Matthew McConaughey: I'm a wild white boy



SAYS the gorgeous Texan of romantic liaisons; "We do not set rules."

By Janet Susan R. Nepales
LA Correspondent

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

LOS ANGELES—"Playing music . . . late night . . . naked . . . that doesn't get anyone in trouble . . . that's healthy," Matthew McConaughey declares in an interview.

The gorgeous six-foot-tall bedimpled actor, known for an incident six years ago when he did play bongos naked at dawn in his house, elaborates: "Do a number in the back garden, in my property; that's not breaking any law. That may be out of the realm of some people. But I am still very much a gentleman. I still do things because they make sense."

McConaughey, producer-star of the action-adventure movie "Sahara"—the top-grossing movie in North America this week—is still haunted by that incident. As most folks know by now, it started when a neighbor complained to the police about loud noise coming from the actor's. When the cops arrived, they saw.

Play hard

This 35-year-old Texan, who almost became a lawyer before deciding to be an actor, admits, "Yeah, I'm a wild white boy. I work hard; I play hard." The image, he points out, maybe a result of his desire "to get out and get to engage with people and go live my life. That is what my production company J K Livin (as in, 'Just keep livin'," a line uttered by his character in the film "Dazed and Confused," which launched his career in 1993) means. It means saying yes to life in some ways. So in doing that, my life is going to be a little more open. And if I was going to worry about it, it is just a waste of time. I am doing what I am doing. If you agree, great; if you disagree, great. You are welcome to it. It feels better that way."

Matthew may sometimes be mistaken as cocky because of such confidence. Actually, he is intelligent, self-effacing and charming.

Portraying the explorer Dirk Pitt in the Breck Eisner-helmed movie, "Sahara," Matthew is doing more than the usual interviews, press conferences and red carpet scenes. In a 28-foot Airstream trailer splashed with the "Sahara" billboard, he drives across the country, in a "door-to-door grassroots campaign." The movie is J K Livin's first offering, with the help of Paramount Studios.

He proudly discloses: "I sleep in that trailer almost every night. I drive the truck that pulls it. I meet people and do barbecues in RV parks. It has driven 6,000 miles. So far, we've had five different screenings in military bases. We've also had screenings in university campuses. We rode through Times Square for an hour and a half, and made a little circus. We have gone to spring training at the Atlanta Braves baseball camp. We have handed out probably 3,000 t-shirts and 5,000 hats."

He narrates that his Dirk Pitt character has gotten him out of one citation. He says, "The guy was like, 'I'm giving you (a ticket). Your mirrors are not there; you are doing 80 in the left lane, dah dah dah. I asked him if he knew Dirk Pitt from 'Sahara' or Clive Cussler who writes these books (from which the movie is adapted). And he goes, 'No, but my wife reads every damn one of them.' Then I said, tell her you just pulled Dirk Pitt over, and he said, 'Really?' And I said, 'Yeah.' He ripped up the ticket and let me go."

Gypsies both

"Sahara," which also stars Steve Zahn and Penelope Cruz, is about and explorer and his wise-cracking sidekick who are on the hunt for a Civil War battleship in the West African desert.

Filmed in Morroco, Spain and United Kingdom, the movie has apparently made a Hollywood item out of McConaughey and Cruz.

Asked how they keep their budding romance alive, Matthew reveals, "One thing good is that we have the same job, so we are both gypsies. We understand each other. Sure you talk when you can, when you want to, and hopefully, you want to talk to each other a lot. We do not set rules. That is not the way life works, especially when you are in a relationship."

Then, asked if he was going to Spain with Penelope this summer when she shoots a movie there, he flashes a sheepish grin. "She's going to Spain in the summer? I did not know that. I get in trouble for this all the time."

FAMILY OF CRAZIES

"Arrested Development," winner of five Emmy Awards and one Golden Globe airs on Star World Thursdays, 9:30 p.m., starting tonight. The series, starring Jason Bateman and Portia de Rossi, transforms the simple, well-worn plot—family of wealthy crazies suddenly becomes penniles—with plenty of original on-the-nail dialogue and innovative treatment. Shot in gritty documentary style, with no fancy lights, no laugh tracks, and with a hand-camera, the show delivers multi-layered humor via wacky antics in a serious context. Go figure.

Filipino produces Aussie Idol film clip

LUKE Torrevillas, a Filipino filmmaker based in Sydney, Australia, has produced the promo film clip for Australian Idol Guy Sebastian's latest single, "Öh Oh."

The film clip is now being aired on Australian television.

In late February, Torrevillas was invited by Sony/BMG to bid for the project. After conferring with twin directors Jon and Josh Baker, Torrevillas' production company, A7 House, had 24 hours to submit their treatment.

The team pitched against a few other companies, including a high-profile director from L.A., but won the contract. They were given five days to prepare for the shoot, and one week to edit before delivery.

On top of this, A7 House was in mid production for a DVD of the FHM Girl Next Door competition, and in preproduction for an Australia Post TV commercial. The latter was being co-directed by Filipino designer and animator Robertino Zambrano.

His company had produced commercials and film clips for other talents, Torrevillas said, but the clip for Guy Sebastian had put his production company in good stead with the record company.

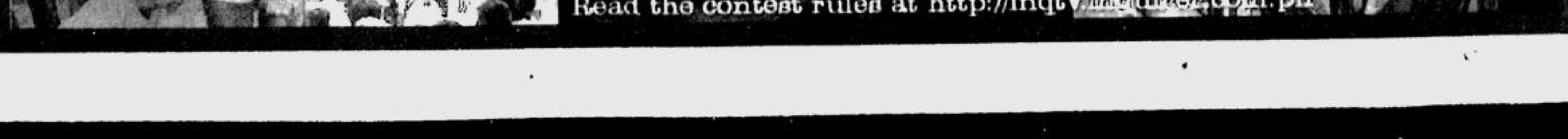
Since the clip went on air, he said, he had heard only good, if not great, reports. "Guy Sebastian loves it, his management loves it and, most importantly, the record company and the fans love it," said Torrevillas.

ABANGAN!
May Tama kaya Mas Mali!
ABC
ClickTheCity.com

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Thursday, April 14, 2005

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Showbiz No. 1 (4:25 PM)	Gatekeepers (5:10 PM)	Gundam Seed (5:35 PM)	The Road To Stardom	TV Patrol		Krystala	Hiram	Spirits	Kamao	TBA	Maalaala Mo Kaya			Insider
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	EZ Shop	PBA				Sentro	PBA					Big News	American Idol		Inq TV	
GMA 7		Saang Sulok Ng Langit	Now and Forever	Glass Shoes	One Piece	Hungry Heart	Knockout	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Darna	All About Eve (8:45 PM)	Full House (9:15 PM)		Magpakailanman			Saksi
RPN 9		Metro TV Shopping	Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Scare Tactics	The Ring	Infamous Murders	NBA On RPN					Newswatch Now	Video Hit Parade	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Police Hour
IBC 13		Lifestyle		EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network		The Hope 1-Million All Filipino					IBC News Tonite		
JackTV		WWE Smackdown				Mutant League	Heavy Gear	Maxsteel	Avengers	Stargate SG1		Thunder Box		JAG		Torn Apart			
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues	Combo Nick				Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix						Rugrats
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	MYX Presents		My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Significant Others	Knock First	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Elimidate	Change of Heart	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	Good Morning Miami	Committed	American Dreams		Queer Eye For The Straight Girl		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
Cinema One		Maruja				Batang PX				Kapag Ignuhit ang Hatol ng Puso				Spirit Warriors				Amasona	
Studio 23				PBL Game 2				Batman Beyond	Project Arms	Wazzup Wazzup	America's Next Top Model			Miss Match		News Central	Oprah		Yes Dear
AXN		Fear Factor (Season V)		CSI: NY (Season I)		The Amazing Race 7		7 Days (Season III)		Pensacola (Season III)		30 Seconds To Fame	30 Seconds To Fame	Lost		The Contender		The World's Most Extreme Races	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		American Idol	Growing Up Gotti	Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	American Idol	Growing Up Gotti	The Chronicle News From The Edge/The Simple Life 2	Arrested Development	The Apprentice			American Idol
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News	CNN Business Traveller	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic		Frontlines Of Construction		Explorations Powered By Duracell		Evolution		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles With Dr. Brady Barr	Wow		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Frontlines Of Construction: Pipe Dream/ Moving The Monsters/Defying Gravity		Explorations Powered By Duracell	
Solar Sports				Boxing: Tua vs. Griffs				GWS Ep.14-2005	Women's Volleyball '04				NBA TV Daily	NBA Game San Antonio @ Utah					NBA Inside Stuff
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Tyler's Ultimate	E! News Weekend		Good Finds	Life & Style		Area		Road & Track	Back To Basics
HBO			Mack The Knife (3:45 PM)				Grace Quigley (5:45 PM)			Blue Thunder (7:15 PM)				Looney Tunes: Back In Action			Her Alibi		
Star Movies		For Love Of The Game (3:15 PM)					Sgt. Bilko			The Hunted (7:10 PM)				Agent Cody Banks			Casper (10:45PM)		
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	The Woody Woodpecker Show	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	X-Men Evolution	Codename Kids Next Door	Gundam Wing	Shaman King	The Powerpuff Girls	Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi	Ed, Edd N Eddy (9:15 PM)	Dexter's Laboratory	Time Squad	Thundercats	He-Man & The Masters Of The Universe	Gundam Seed
ESPN				ESPN Great Outdoor Games				UEFA Champions League 2004/05				Sportscenter Asia	UEFA Champions League 2004/05					Goals!	Sportscenter Asia
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	The Sleepover Club	Art Attack/ Untalkative Bunny	Buzz Lightyear Of Star Command	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	House Of Mouse	Wonderful World Of Disney			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	America's Funniest Home Video	According To Jim	Wonderful World Of Disney	
Cinemax				The Long Island Incident			Music From Another Room				Rollerball (7:20 PM)			Pirates: Survival Island			Fatal Lessons: The Good Teacher		
Hallmark Channel	Who's The Boss	Strong Medicine		HCA: The Fairytaler	Sesame Street		Mad About You	Who's The Boss	Bewitched	The District		Strong Medicine		Back When We Were Grown Ups			Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye (10:35PM)		The District (11:25PM)
Discovery Channel		Hour Asia				Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Extreme Machines		Ultimates		Wild Science		Battleship Yamato		Power Zone	
Sports Plus	Arena Football: Philadelphia @ Colorado						Search TV Ep.2 Hawaii	Raceworld		World's Greatest Auto Shows		Lingerie Bowl				Nascar Advance Auto Parts 500			
NBN		Taiwan/ Winner TV Shopping		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision	Next Stop			Network Forum		Teledyaryo		Sinulog Festival					

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.



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JONES: humor and heart

Jones lights up 'Golden Pond'

NEW YORK—He moves with the slowest of gaits. Carrying the weight of his years, he seems the epitome of a man who has lost his bearings and the will to live.

"You're old, and I'm ancient," he growls to his long-suffering wife. Yet don't be fooled.

Retired college professor Norman Thayer Jr., in the person of actor James Earl Jones, is the liveliest presence on stage. The play is a spirited revival of "On Golden Pond," Ernest Thompson's generous meditation on mortality, that opened last week at Broadway's Cort Theatre.

Combustible

And the 74-year-old Jones, not seen on Broadway since his Tony Award-winning turn in August Wilson's "Fences," in 1987, is giving one of those theatrically combustible performances that spark the entire production. The dynamic Jones invests the role not only with humor, but with a great deal of heart as well.

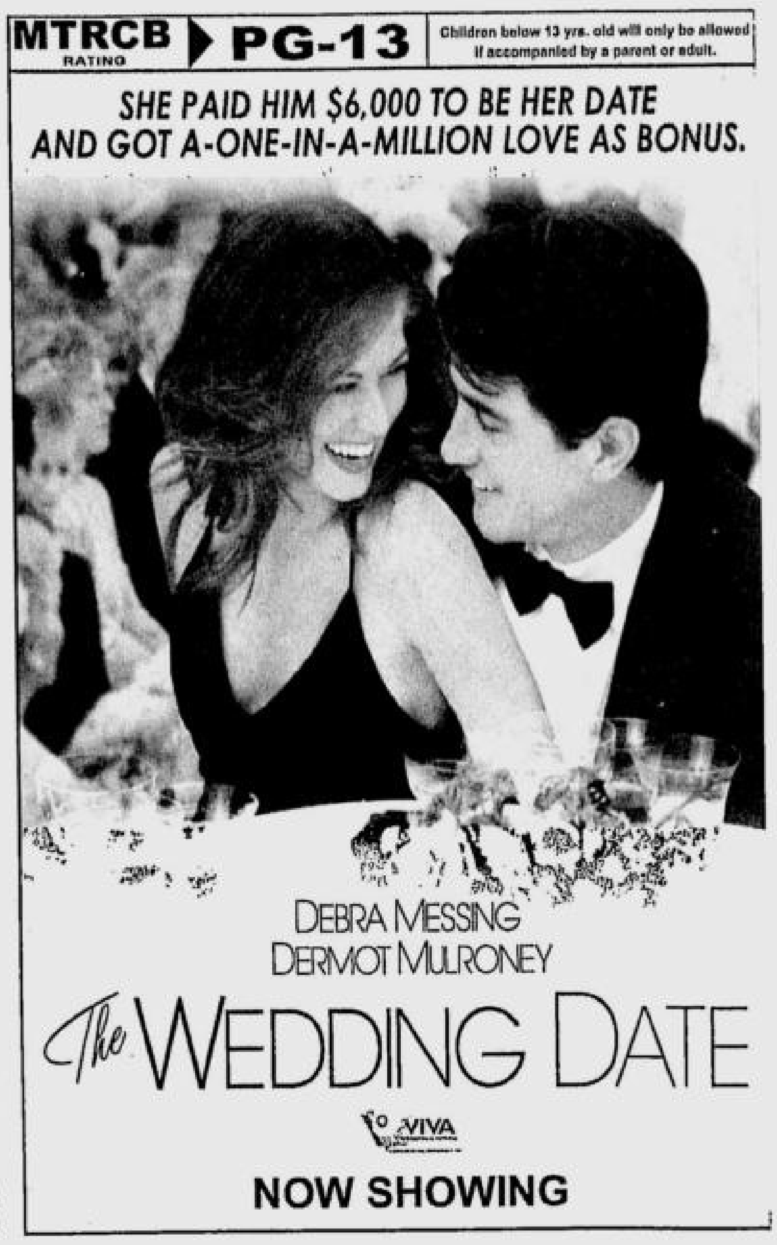
Thompson's play, first seen off-Broadway in 1978 and later on Broadway, is perhaps best known from its 1981 movie version, which starred Henry Fonda, Katharine Hepburn and Jane Fonda.

Deceptive

This "Pond," directed with care by Leonard Foglia, is a deceptively sunny play, perhaps because it is set on that idyllic lake, captured here in all its picture-postcard beauty by designer Ray Klause.

Yet there is an undercurrent of sadness that runs throughout the evening, a heart-tugging melancholy that the actors skillfully convey.

The play has been trimmed a bit, but none of the dialogue has been changed, according to the author. *AP*


MTRCB RATING PG-13
Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult.
SHE PAID HIM $6,000 TO BE HER DATE AND GOT A-ONE-IN-A-MILLION LOVE AS BONUS.
DEBRA MESSING
DERMOT MULRONEY
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WEDDING DATE
12:25 / 2:35 / 4:45 / 6:55 / 9:05
FINDING NEVERLAND
SAMARA RING 2
12:20 / 2:40 / 5:00 / 7:20 / 9:40
ONG BAK
12:10 / 2:30 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9:30
SAHARA
1:15 / 4:00 / 6:45 / 9:30
THE PACIFIER
2:10 / 4:35 / 7:00 / 9:25
SPONGEBOB & SQUAREPANTS
1:30 / 3:50 / 6:10 / 8:30
HIDE & SEEK
2:00 / 4:30 / 7:00 / 9:30
CLOSER
1:50 / 4:20 / 6:50 / 9:20

ALI MALL CINEMAS

❶ **SAHARA**
12:20 / 3:05 / 5:50 / 8:35
❷ **ONG BAK**
11:00 / 1:20 / 3:40 / 6:00 / 8:20
❸ **SAMARA RING 2**
11:10 / 1:30 / 3:50 / 6:10 / 8:30
❹ **PELUKANG ITIM**
12:10 / 2:10 / 4:10 / 6:10 / 8:10
❺ **THE PACIFIER**
12:55 / 3:20 / 5:45 / 8:10

DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

ARANETA COLISEUM EVENTS

THE CASCADES: LIVE IN MANILA
April 15 Friday, 8pm
RIVERMAYA & KITCHIE NADAL LIVE!
April 16, Saturday, 8pm
2005 PBA FIESTA CONFERENCE *Apr. 17*
4:15pm Alaska vs. Red Bull / 6:35pm Ginebra vs. Talk N Text
MARTIN & PATTI THE REPEAT !
April 22, Saturday, 8:30pm

CENTER EVENTS

SALE EVENTS	*Van Heusen Dress Shirt Sale ongoing until April 17 and Mod Milano Jewelry Sale ongoing until April 15, Ground Floor of Gateway Mall*
EXHIBITS	*Pope John Paul II Memorial Exhibit ongoing until April 16 at Level 3 of Gateway Mall*
SPECIAL PROMOS	*Hush Puppies Get Into the Wave Promo ongoing until April 30 at Level 2 of Gateway Mall.*

LOG ON TO www.aranetacenter.net FOR MORE DETAILS OR TO SUBSCRIBE TO OUR WEEKLY E-MAIL ENTERTAINMENT UPDATES

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MOVIE GUIDE
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6th floor Shangrila Plaza EDSA corner Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City
Telephone: 633.2227 / 6337851 loc. 171

1 (DOLBY)	WEDDING DATE *PG13*
2 (DOLBY)	FINDING NEVERLAND *GP*
3 (DOLBY)	SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS *GP*
4 (DOLBY)	SAHARA *PG13*

PREMIERE

(DOLBY)	SAMARA (RING 2) *PG13*

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216

1	SAHARA
2	SPONGEBOB
3	SAMARA (RING - 2)
4	WEDDING DATE

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 733.4238

1 (DOLBY)	RESERVED
2	RESERVED
3	RESERVED
4	RESERVED
5	RESERVED

Masagana CINEMA 2000
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274

1	SAHARA
2	ONG BAK
3	SAMARA (RING -2)

starmall Movies
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1	RESERVED
2	RESERVED
3	PELUKANG ITIM
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX)	SAHARA
5	ONG BAK

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2	PELUKANG ITIM
3	UNDER RENOVATION
4	UNDER RENOVATION
5 (DOLBY)	SAHARA
6	WEDDING DATE

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2	RENTAL RESERVATION

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2 (SDDS)	FINDING NEVERLAND
3 (DTS)	SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
4 GOLD (DTS)	HIDE AND SEEK
5 GOLD (DOLBY)	SAHARA
6 GOLD (SDDS)	PACIFIER
7 GOLD (DOLBY)	SAMARA (RING -2)
8 [illegible]	PELUKANG ITIM
9 [illegible]	CLOSER
10 [illegible]	ONG BAK

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SAHARA
THE PACIFIER
SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
HIDE AND SEEK
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1	SAHARA
2	ONG BAK
3	SAMARA RING 2
4	PELUKANG ITIM
5	THE PACIFIER

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1	ALONE IN THE DARK
2	PILUKANG ITIM
3	
4	RESERVED

Universal
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1	SAHARA

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 (DOLBY EX)	MISS CONGENIALITY
2	ALONE IN THE DARK
3 (DTS EX)	PACIFIER
4	DEATH CURSED

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121

1	MISS CONGENIALITY
2	ALONE IN THE DARK
3 (DOLBY)	PACIFIER
4 (DTS)	DEATH CURSED

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489

1	HOSTAGE
2	CONFIDENCE
3 (DOLBY)	CURSED
4 (DTS)	SHAOLIN VS' EVILDEAD

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1	MILLION DOLLAR BABY
2	SHAOLIN VS' EVILDEAD

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tel 687.6963 or 72

1 (DOLBY)	SAMARA
2 (DOLBY)	SAHARA
3 (DOLBY)	WEDDING DATE
4 (DOLBY)	FINDING NEVERLAND

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2 (DTS)	MISS CONGENIALITY
3 (DOLBY)	SAHARA
4	CLOSER

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146

1	CLOSER
2 (DOLBY)	SAHARA
3 (DTS)	MISS CONGENIALITY
4	CURSED

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1	BUNSHINSABA
2	FINAL CUT
3 (DOLBY)	HOSTAGE

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1	FINAL CUT
2	SHAOLIN VS' EVILDEAD
3 (DOLBY)	SORUM
4 (DTS)	HIDE AND SEEK

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(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320

1	CLOSER
2	HOSTAGE
3 (DOLBY)	MISS CONGENIALITY

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(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (SDDS)	GRO
2	MAPUSOK
3	PILUKANG ITIM
4 (DTS)	BENTH LOCHNESS

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY)	SAHARA
2	CLOSER
3 (DTS)	MISS CONGENIALITY
4	HUWAD NA HAYOP
5	CURSED

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1	FINAL CUT
2	CURSED
3 (DTS)	BE COOL
4 (DOLBY)	HOSTAGE

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1	ALONE IN THE DARK
2	CURSED
3	SEX & ZEN
4	HIDE AND SEEK

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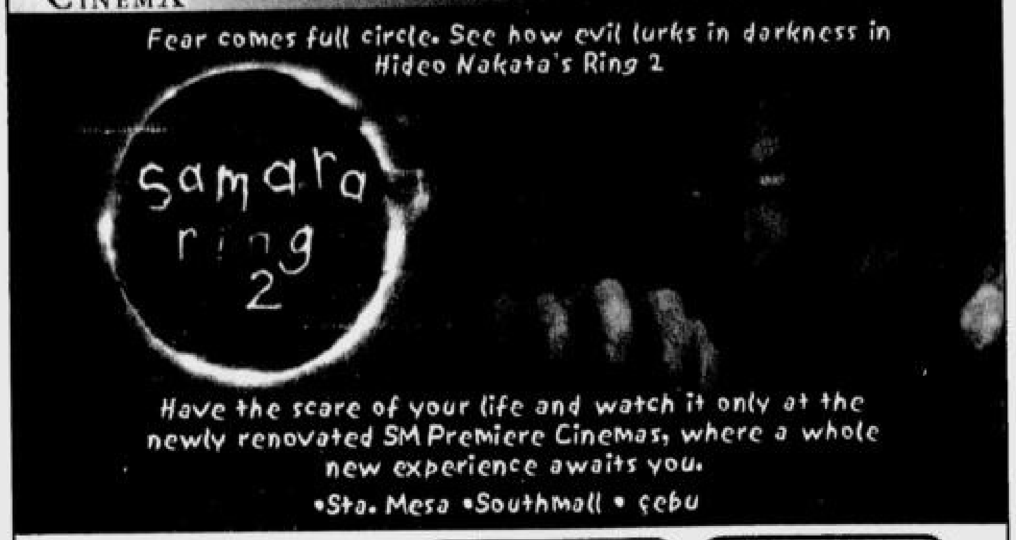

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2. FINDING NEVERLAND
11:25 FS / 11:55 MF / 2:05 / 4:15 / 6:25 8:35 / 10:15 LFS / 10:45 LMF / 12:25 END
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2 SAMARA: RING 2
3 FINDING NEVERLAND
4 HIDE AND SEEK
5 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
6 THE WEDDING DATE
7 PELUKANG ITIM
8 SAHARA
9 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
10 RESERVED
11 RESERVED
12 RESERVED

sm city fairview
1 ROBOTS
2 BOOGEYMAN
3 THE PACIFIER
4 SAHARA
5 HIDE AND SEEK
6 FINDING NEVERLAND
7 SAMARA: RING 2
8 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
9 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
10 THE WEDDING DATE
11 LOVE ME IF YOU DARE smcinemaexclusive
12 PELUKANG ITIM

sm city north edsa
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 THE WEDDING DATE
4 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
5 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
6 FINDING NEVERLAND
7 SAHARA
8 SAMARA: RING 2

sm city manila
1 THE WEDDING DATE
2 CLOSER
3 FINDING NEVERLAND
4 THE PACIFIER
5 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
6 SAHARA
7 PELUKANG ITIM
8 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
9 SAMARA: RING 2
10 BOOGEY MAN
11 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
12 HIDE AND SEEK

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1 SAMARA: RING 2
2 FINDING NEVERLAND
3 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
4 RESERVED
5 RESERVED
6 PELUKANG ITIM
7 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
8 SAHARA
9 THE WEDDING DATE
10 THE PACIFIER

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2 RESERVED
3 SAHARA
4 FINDING NEVERLAND
5 PELUKANG ITIM
6 THE WEDDING DATE
7 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
8 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
9 THE PACIFIER
10 SAMARA: RING 2

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1 SAHARA
2 THE WEDDING DATE
3 SAMARA: RING 2
4 ONG BAK: THA THAI WARRIOR

sm cinema tutuban
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

sm supercenter sucat
1 SAHARA
2 SAMARA: RING 2
3 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
4 THE WEDDING DATE

LUZON

sm city pampanga
1 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
2 FINDING NEVERLAND
3 HOSTAGE
4 CLOSER
5 BOOGEYMAN
6 THE PACIFIER

sm city baguio
1 BE COOL
2 SAMARA: RING 2
3 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
4 THE PACIFIER

sm city batangas
1 FINDING NEVERLAND
2 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
3 CLOSER
4 HIDE AND SEEK

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1 FINDING NEVERLAND
2 BE COOL
3 THE WEDDDING DATE
4 SAMARA: RING 2

sm city marilao
1 FINDING NEVERLAND
2 SHAOLIN v.s EVIL DEAD
3 THE PACIFIER
4 BE COOL

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1 HIDE AND SEEK
2 FINDING NEVERLAND
3 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
4 SAMARA: RING 2
5 SAHARA
6 THE PACIFIER
7 THE WEDDING DATE
8 PELUKANG ITIM

sm city lucena
1 HOSTAGE
2 FINDING NEVERLAND
3 FINAL CUT
4 MS. CONGENIALITY 2

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

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1 SAMARA: RING 2
2 RESERVED
3 THE PACIFIER
4 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
5 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
6 HITCH
7 HOSTAGE
8 SAHARA

sm city iloilo
1 CONFIDENCE
2 RESERVED
3 BE COOL
4 SHAOLIN v.s EVIL DEAD
5 HOSTAGE
6 CLOSER
7 RESERVED
8 ALONE IN THE DARK

sm city davao
1 SAHARA
2 CONFIDENCE
3 SON OF THE MASK 2
4 BE COOL
5 CLOSER
6 HITCH

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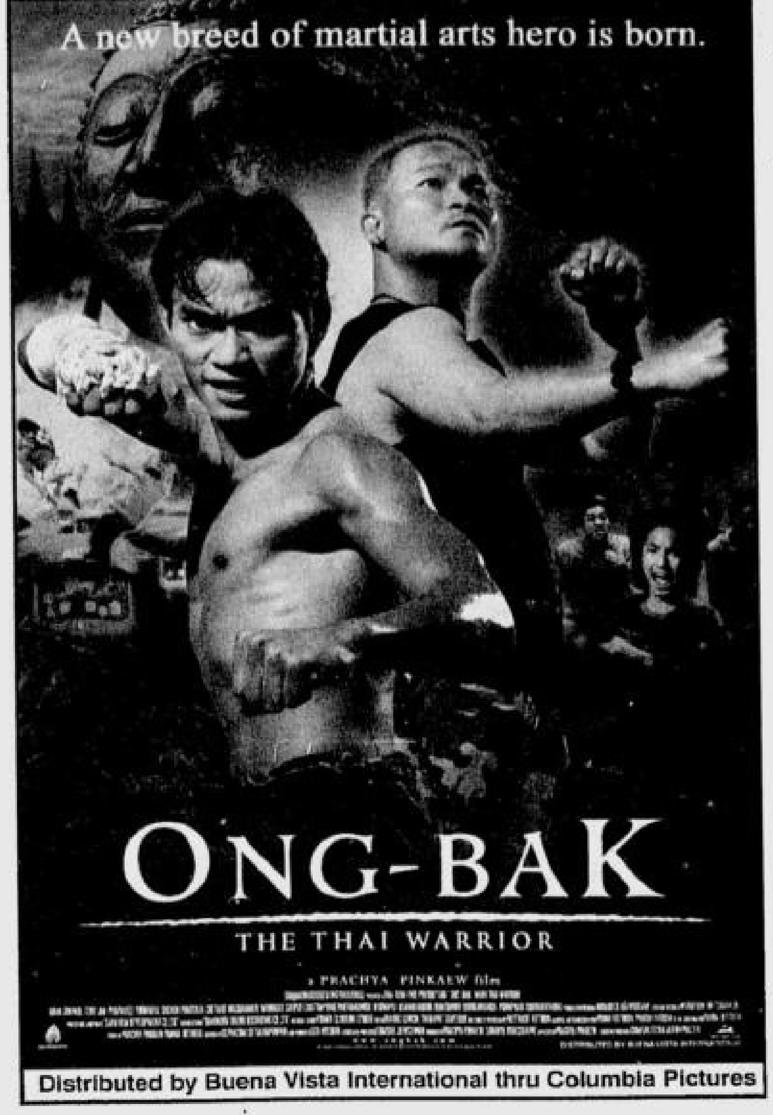

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2 SAHARA 11:55, 2:45, 5:35 8:25, 11:05 PG-13
3 WEDDING DATE PLEASE CALL FOR SCREENING TIME PG-13
4 FINDING NEVERLAND PLEASE CALL FOR SCREENING TIME GP

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WEDDING DATE PG13 12:00,2:00,4:00, 6:00,8:00,10:00	SAMARA: RING 2 R13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:10	SAHARA PG13 12:15,2:45,5:15,7:45,10:20

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CINEMA 2 FINDING NEVERLAND 11:10, 1:25, 3:35, 5:45, 7:55, 10:10 GP
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② FINDING NEVERLAND MTRCB: GP 11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40, 7:50, 10:00
③ THE SPONGEBOB MTRCB. GP 12:15, 2:25, 4:35, 6:45, 9:00
④ SAHARA MTRCB. PG-13 10:40, 1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00
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Shangri-La Plaza

Echo, in the eyes of his son's mother

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

AMID all the frenzy about who will be the leading lady of Jericho Rosales in ABS-CBN 2's TV version of the Pinoy classic "Panday," I thought of asking a special lady in Echo's life her sentiments about the new Panday. Nope I'm not referring to Cindy Kurleto, Kristine Hermosa nor Angelika de la Cruz (all linked to Echo once upon a time or once upon a promo!) but to the ravishingly beautiful Kai Palomares with whom Echo has a lovechild Santino, now four years old. Kai is star material but she would rather keep a low profile. I have always admired her for being so simple "un-showbiz." And unlike most girls who have love children by actors, she does not make a big deal out of it. Neither does she go Jericho-bashing. Kai beams, "Of course Santino and I are both very happy and proud that Echo has been chosen to be the new Panday. Santino says that his 'Pops' will be like Samurai Jack. It's nice to see Echo blessed with such great roles. We will support his career advancement." Would she allow their *unico hijo* to be part of the *fantaserye*? She says, "Echo and I want to keep Santino's privacy. But I will allow him to watch his dad's taping in Ilocos if Echo wants him to. He is a great dad."

And as for Echo's leading lady?

"Whoever he is most comfortable with."

Isn't she wary about the competition with GMA-7's "Darna"?

"It's all healthy [competition]. I wish both 'Panday' and 'Darna' the best!"

What a woman, huh? More than Panday's magic sword, Kai and Santino are truly Jericho's lucky charms/*anting anting*.

Chat with Mark

GOT to chat with actor non-pareil Mark Gil. It was fun reminiscing the good old days with him.

We agreed that, in spite of all the intrigues, show biz is still a wonderful world to grow old in. And the best part is, actors usually age well. Maybe because they are paid to look good. Add to that all the fun and glam that comes with the territory.

As I usually say in jest, "We show biz folk are retarded. *Di kami tumatanda!*" Mark has had his share of checkerboard romances but he has mellowed. He's happily settled with his charming wife Maricar Jacinto and their lovely 9-year-old daughter Cherie—named after Mark's equally famous sister whose son is named after him.

His other kids have ventured into show biz as well. He's got six kids all in all, two with Irene Celebre, two with Bing Loyzaga, one with Jaclyn Jose and one with his true love Maricar. The actor is now a proud *lolo*. Mark grins, "Yup, I'm a grandpa *na* but you have to guess who among my kids gave me two *apos* already!"

It doesn't really matter to me 'cause I wouldn't have guessed that he was already a *lolo* to begin with.

China sightings

THE FOREVER gorgeous China Cojuangco has been spotted hanging out with Luis Alandy. She was also seen having fun with a band member of "Barbie's Cradle."

When I teased her about it, she just smiled "They're both my super friends. There's nothing more to it." With her many charms, it's really no surprise that she has remained a "crush ng Bayan" all this time.

Guess who?

GUESS who this beauty queen-turned actress is! She walked out during the shooting of a movie because she had enough of the director's meticulous ways. She snapped at him, "Direk, you're my friend but sorry I can't take this anymore!" I wonder if the director will give the beauty queen a crown of … thorns?

Whose wife is it anyway

MEMBERS of the Philippine House of Representatives, the diplomatic corps and other prominent guests trooped to the opening night of Repertory Philippines' adaptation of Ray Cooney's comedy hit, "Whose Wife Is It Anyway?"

Among those seen enjoying the play were Representatives Francis Escudero, Teddy Boy Locsin, Gilbert Remulla, Arnulfo Fuentebella, Jack Duavit and Joseph Emilio Abaya, who came with their wives, families and friends.

A first-of-a-kind production, this award-winning play tells us about the misadventures of a Pinoy congressman (fictitious, of course) as he goes on a secret romantic tryst with his mistress in a posh hotel along Roxas Boulevard. All hell breaks loose when they discover a body hanging from their hotel suite window.

"Whose Wife Is It Anyway?" runs till April 24 at Rep's Globe Theater Onstage, Greenbelt 1. Evening performances at 8 p.m. every Friday and Saturday with 3:30 p.m. matinees Saturdays and Sundays. Tickets are available at the Rep Office, Ayala Ticketrons and Ticketworld outlets. Call 887-0710.

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Editor Emmie G. Velarde

Aga on fatherhood and being fat

He finds it curious that he started 'really' talking to Janice and their son Luigi only after he married Charlene

By Marinel R. Cruz

Had Luigi and I maintained constant communication, *okay sana ang lahat* (everything would be okay)."

Award-winning actor Aga Muhlach, speaking with entertainment writers on Tuesday, thus admitted that one of his greatest regrets was not spending more time with his eldest son Luigi, whose mother is actress Janice de Belen.

Luigi is 17 years old. He has lived exclusively with his mother since he was a baby because his parents never lived together.

"I'm not saying that Janice hasn't been a good mother. *Nahulma ko [lang] sana siya* (I could have molded him) when he was younger," the actor said. "Now we're frantically catching up and it's hard. But it's a good start."

Luigi, currently enrolled at the Philippine School of Interior Design, has not been very focused on his studies, Aga said, hardly able to hide his disappointment.

Cool dad

"He's a freshman; he could have been in third year by now," Aga said. "I always tell him, 'This is what I'm offering you ... this is what your mom is offering you. But it seems that you prefer something else. If something happens to you, you suffer the consequences. I guess you want to learn things the hard way.'"

The actor added: "I'm not saying that what he will learn in school would make him rich; I'm after the discipline and sense of responsibility that will help him achieve what he wants in life."

Aga has been married for five years now to actress and former beauty queen Charlene Gonzalez, with whom he has twins—Atasha and Andres, three years old. Janice has four kids by actor John Estrada.

"I treat Luigi the way I treat the twins," Aga said. "He's even luckier than the two; *hindi ko siya napalo* (I never got to spank him). It's hard to dictate to Luigi because he didn't grow up with me. So I'm just cool with him. I tell him, '*Sige, barkada tayo* (Let's be pals). Let's not complicate things.'"

As far as Aga is concerned, the formula is effective. "We're very open with each other. He talks to me about his concerns. He's at the house almost every day."

The actor finds it ironic that he and his son started hanging out only after he married Charlene. "In fact," he said, "I started really talking with Janice also after I got married. Again, at least that's a good start."

In any case, Aga said, he was confident that Luigi would straighten out. "He's a good boy. He doesn't have vices, unlike other kids. He's just in that stage when he feels he can do anything he wants. We clash in matters [pertaining to] school and his priorities. I've told him, '*Kung magloloko ka tablado ka* (If you fool around, we're quits) and you will get nothing from me.'"

The actor added: "If he doesn't want to study, that's fine with me, but I always point out the consequences to him. I tell him, this is your future we're talking about."

Shaping up

Aga is set to leave for Dubai this week to work on his upcoming movie with Claudine Barretto and John Lloyd Cruz. Rory B. Quintos will direct the movie for Star Cinema.

"The movie starts and ends in Dubai," said Aga. "We'll be keeping a tight schedule. I'm expecting hitches. *Tao lang naman kami* (We're only human). The cast will stay there for 17 days."

The movie revolves around the life of Filipino workers in Dubai. "I used to think that OFWs in Dubai were your typical seamen and domestic helpers. I just found out that there are Filipino yuppies there, too. My character is involved in a forex type of business," he explained.

Aga prepared for the project by spending long hours in the gym, engaging in boxing and playing badminton. "I gained 40 pounds last year. I didn't realize I was getting heavier until the whole country started telling me I was fat."

People would joke about his being overweight, he said, even on his own TV show, "Okey, Fine, Whatever" on ABS-CBN.

He became very insecure and reclusive, Aga said. "At first I laughed it off. Then I stopped attending socials and other events, and simply stayed at home. I felt yucky. I love eating. That was what I did the whole year last year. Would you believe that I hit 205 pounds? My ideal weight is 165. I'm determined to get back there."

(email the author at mcruz@inquirer.com.ph)

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ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS MOVIE GUIDE

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MOVIES/SCHEDULES/PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

GALLERIA 632-9115/16

1 THE PACIFIER • THX
2 SAMARA - RING 2
3 ONG BAK
4 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
5 SAHARA
6 THE WEDDING DATE
7 PILUKANG ITIM
8 BOSO
9 HIDE AND SEEK
10 MS. CONGENIALITY 2

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 SAHARA
2 ONG BAK
3 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
4 HIDE AND SEEK
5 SAMARA RING 2
6 BOSO
7 THE WEDDING DATE

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 SAHARA
2 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
3 THE PACIFIER
4 HIDE AND SEEK
5 THE WEDDING DATE
6 ONG BAK
7 PILUKANG ITIM
8 SAMARA

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31

1 SAHARA
2 THE WEDDING DATE
3 SPONGBOB SQUAREPANTS
4 SAMARA - RING 2
5 HIDE AND SEEK
6 PILUKANG ITIM
7 RESERVE
8 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 SAHARA
2 THE WEDDING DATE
3 SAMARA RING 2
4 ONG BAK

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 PILUKANG ITIM
2 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
3 BE COOL
4 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

CAINTA 240-4661

1 SAHARA
2 THE WEDDING DATE
3 ONG BAK
4 SAMARA - RING 2

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april 13-19

STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907

1 SAHARA
2 CLOSER
3 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
4 BOOGEYMAN
5 NANG NAK

LIPA (043) 757-3664 (043) 312-5870

1 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
2 HIDE AND SEEK
3 CURSED
4 ALONE IN THE DARK
5 5 CHILDREN AND IT

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 418-4332

1 THE WEDDING DATE
2 BOOGEYMAN
3 SAMARA - RING 2
4 BE COOL
5 MS. CONGENIALITY 2

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 MS. CONGENIALITY 2
2 THE PACIFIER
3 ALONE IN THE DARK
4 CLOSER

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188

1 SAHARA
2 PILUKANG ITIM
3 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS
4 THE WEDDING DATE
5 BE COOL
6 SAMARA - RING 2

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270

1 CURSED
2 BOOGEYMAN
3 CLOSER
4 HAROLD AND KUMAR
5 THE PACIFIER
6 MS. CONGENIALITY 2

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0459

1 HIDE AND SEEK
2 CURSED
3 SPANGLISH
4 HOSTAGE
5 THE FINAL CUT
6 CLOSER

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 BE COOL
2 CONFIDENCE
3 CLOSER
4 HOSTAGE
5 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD
6 LITTLE BLACK BOOK

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For marketing and events/reservations please call Marketing Services Department at 687-7945 to 47 locals 14 and 15

AYALA CENTER
GLORIETTA • GREENBELT

ALABANG TOWN CENTER

AYALA CENTER CEBU

AYALA MALLS
LoveMall!

ALOHA YO
Featuring music from Disney's Lilo & Stitch Island Favorites

AYALA CENTER
April 21 & 22 6:30 pm,
April 23 & 24 11:30 am,
3pm & 6pm
Glorietta Activity Center

ALABANG TOWN CENTER
April 29, 30 & May 1
3pm & 6pm
Activity Center

AYALA CENTER CEBU
May 6 to 8
11 am & 6pm
Activity Center

Also showing at Market Market on May 13, 4pm & 6pm
Pavilion Mall on May 14, 5pm
Metropoint on May 15, 6pm

An all reserved seats right in each mall
avails Discount Plus Card members

TOWER RECORDS LoveMall!

Catch Lilo's summer musical show live at the Ayala Malls featuring Bea Binene as LILO, Chynna Ortaleza and Nadine Samonte as NANI, Dion Ignacio and Tyrone Perez as DAVID, Paul Salas as DANIEL. Plus the SOP boys - Macmac, Emil, Edward and Yexel. Directed by Freddie Santos

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	AYALA CENTER CEBU
Anson Emporium Appliance Madness April 8-18, 2005	Town Sale / Off-Road Show 2005 April 15-17, 2005	BPI Automadness Opening Ceremonies April 21, 2005

AYALA

Ad Congress Party
April 14, 2005

GREENBELT Onstage AYALA CENTER

REPERTORY PHILIPPINES presents
Whose Wife is it Anyway?
at REP's GLOBE THEATER for the Month of April
For inquiries, please call 887-0710

Ayala MUSEUM

Visit the New Ayala Museum located beside Greenbelt 4 along Makati Avenue.
For inquiries, please call 757-7117.

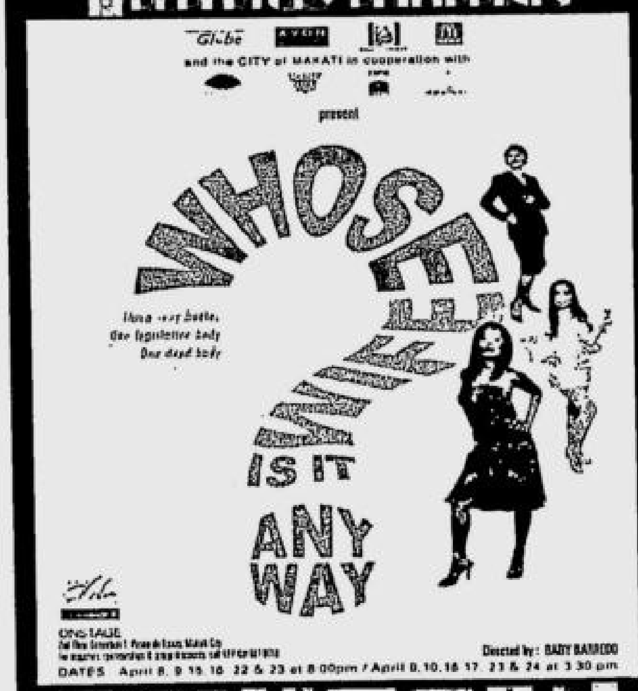
AYALA CINEMAS

AYALA CINEMAS

Reserve your seats by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS GB4 to 2333 (Globe) or 211 (Smart) or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.

THX

G1	GLORIETTA 1	1 SAMARA (RING 2)	2 THE WEDDING DATE	3 SAHARA	4 PELUKANG ITIM
G4	GLORIETTA 4	1 SAMARA (RING 2)	2 FINDING NEVERLAND	3 THX SAHARA 12:30, 3:00, 5:30, 8:00, 10:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	
		4 ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR	5 THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS	6 THE WEDDING DATE	7 HIDE & SEEK
GB1	GREENBELT 1	1 SAHARA 11:40, 2:10, 4:40, 7:10, 9:40	2 THE WEDDING DATE 11:10, 1:10, 3:10, 5:10, 7:10, 9:10		
GB3	GREENBELT 3	1 THX SAMARA (RING 2) 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX THE WEDDING DATE 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS		
		3 CLOSER 2:40, 4:45, 6:50, 8:55, 11:00 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 FINDING NEVERLAND 1:05, 3:10, 5:15, 7:20, 9:25, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	5 SAHARA 1:20, 3:50, 6:20, 8:50, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX THE WEDDING DATE	2 SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS		
		3 SAMARA (RING 2)	4 FINDING NEVERLAND	5 SAHARA	
ACC	AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 SAMARA (RING 2)	2 THE PACIFIER	3 MS. CONGENIALITY 2	4 SAHARA


REPERTORY PHILIPPINES
Globe
and the CITY of MAKATI in cooperation with
present
WHOSE WIFE IS IT ANYWAY
Directed by: BABY BARREDO
DATES April 8, 9, 15, 16, 22 & 23 at 8:00pm / April 9, 10, 16, 17, 23 & 24 at 3:30 pm

Onstage AYALA CINEMAS

Onstage Greenbelt

in Ayala Center, Makati City is now accepting bookings for concerts, product launches and other corporate events for May to July 2005.

For bookings, please call Lissa at 752 7862

Customer Service text hotline: 0917 6095900
Customer Service text hotline: Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 8pm
Greenbelt - 752 4853; from 11am to 12mn
Alabang Town Center - 842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc 324

Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification call 729 7777

All-Digital Cinemas

MARKET! MARKET!

The fun is in the finds

Developed and managed by Ayala Land, Inc.

Movies are subject to change without prior notice.
Customer Service Hotline: 886-7515

Free Seating Cinemas: P70.00

① Pelukang Itim
② SpongeBob Squarepants
③ Ong Bak
④ Finding Neverland

Guaranteed Seats Cinemas: P90.00

⑤ Sahara
⑥ Samara (Ring 2)
⑦ The Wedding Date

EVENTS! EVENTS!

MARKET! MARKET! The fun is in the finds

SALE! SALE!

TIME TO HARVEST THE BEST DEALS

April 15-16 10am-12midnight
April 17 10am-9pm

Special Events:

April 15
Star Records presents
Michael Cruz & Johann Escañan
6 pm, Activity Center

April 16
Axe: Choose the Girl, Spend Her Money
11am-6pm, Activity Center

April 17 to 20
GO F.I.S.H. Bazaar
11am-9pm, Activity Center

MARKET! MARKET! The fun is in the finds

Not a date movie

By Anna Paloma
Contributor

REVIEW

"Closer" (based on the hit play by Patrick Marber)
Directed by Mike Nichols
Starring Julia Roberts, Jude Law, Clive Owen and Natalie Portman

JULIA Roberts and Jude Law

ON THE surface, "Closer" simply tells the story of two couples whose infidelities rip them apart. But a "closer" look will reveal a study of human anima and its putrefaction. The film has widely been noted for its frank dialogue that captures intimate moments that most people wouldn't admit to having gone through—neediness, crassness and rudeness among them. We hear words that we ourselves say, ostensibly to make our partner feel good (or bad), but really to make the other person stay (or leave). We witness the same jabs we pull, passively or aggressively and the primal lashing-out when our security is threatened.

There's plenty of profanity, but also a host of interesting observations. "Closer" is talky, but in a smart way. We never feel the characters speak merely to hear themselves or to fill up screen time. Sex is a tool used in their power games, emotions are weaknesses to be exploited.

Brutal

From a physical standpoint, "Closer" is not a violent film but, emotionally, it is brutal.

The music is exceptional throughout, but most notably so during the film's most comic scene, when Dan (Law), pretending to be Anna (Roberts), lures Larry (Owen) into a cybersex encounter. Nichols' choice to go with classical music works well against this backdrop; it only brings the ugly behavior into sharper relief.

Nichols is an actor's director. Visually, "Closer" is the opposite of his last project, HBO's six-hour adaptation of the Pulitzer Prize-winning "Angels in America," yet both projects cut to the core of human relationships. Nichols is clearly a specialist in that area.

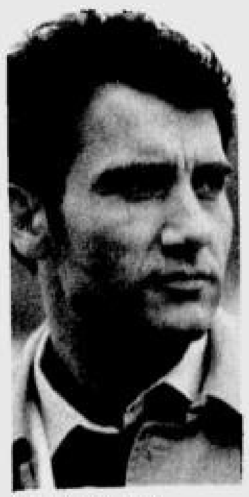
"Closer" has no doubt inspired endless discussions and debates, and will certainly continue to do so: Does one ever fully know another? Is it goos to know everything about your partner—all the dirty little secrets? At what point does lying to spare your partner's feelings become outright deception? And, as Dan asks, what's so great about the truth, anyway?

Disturbing

This is powerful and disturbing stuff. It is not life-affirming, that is to say, not for those who want to leave the theater uplifted and convinced that fairy tale endings are possible.

And this is most definitely not a date movie.

But for those who'd rather have substance than style, risks more than formulas, plus Oscar-caliber performances, "Closer" is not to be missed.


CLIVE Owen

'Interpreter' for a cause

THE UNIVERSITY of the Philippines College of Law Class of 1980, celebrating its Silver Jubilee, presents a special advance screening of "The Interpreter" on April 18, 2005, 7:30 p.m., at the Teatro Aguinaldo (AFP Multi-Purpose Hall) in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

Directed by Oscar winner Sydney Pollack, "The Interpreter" stars Academy Award winners Nicole Kidman and Sean Penn.

The movie screening will be preceded by cocktails and entertainment at the theater lobby starting at 6 p.m. Proceeds from the event will fund scholarship grants and other projects for the UP College of Law. For tickets, call 849-2281.

star group of cinemas movie guide
IN DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND

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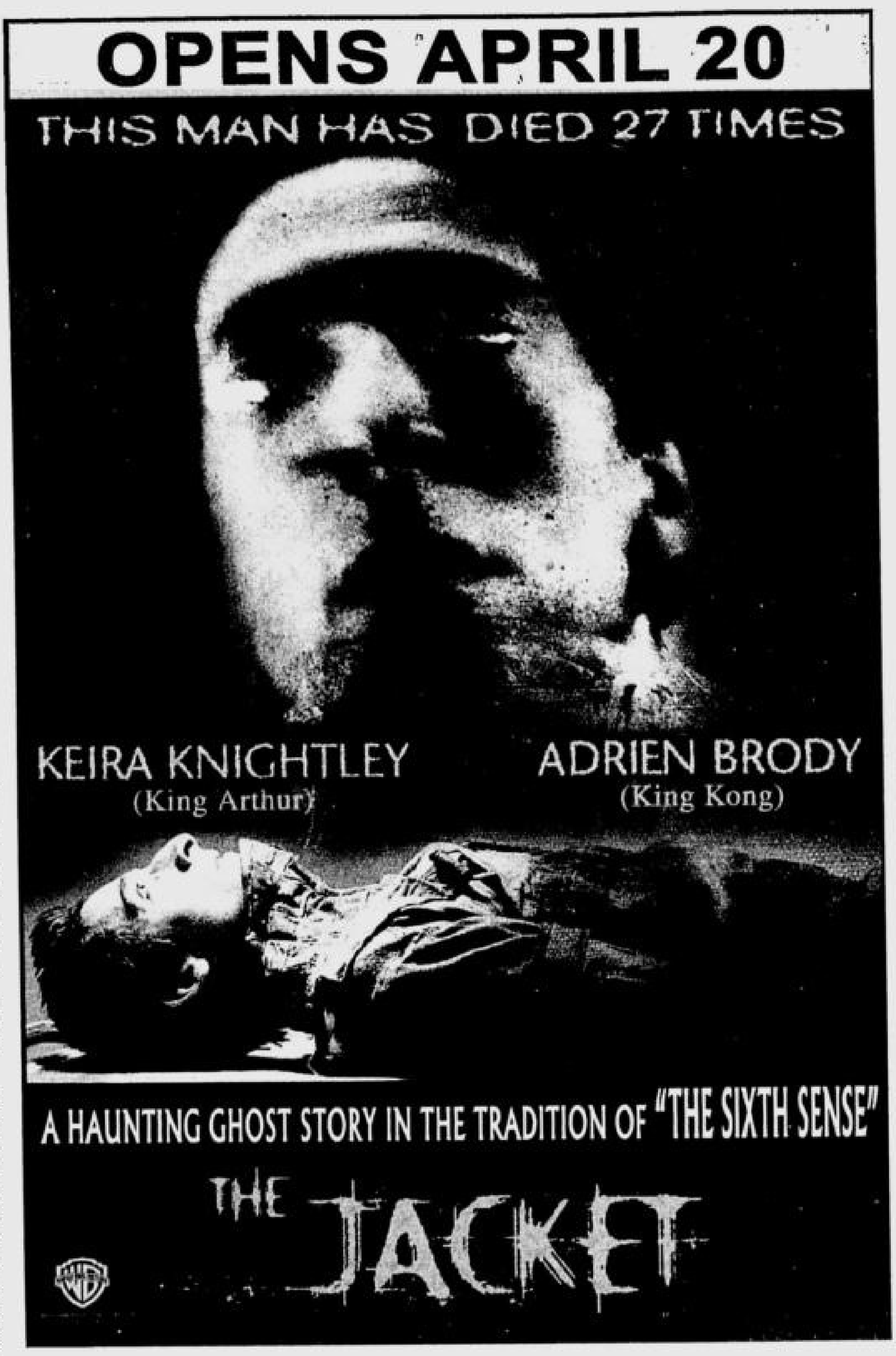
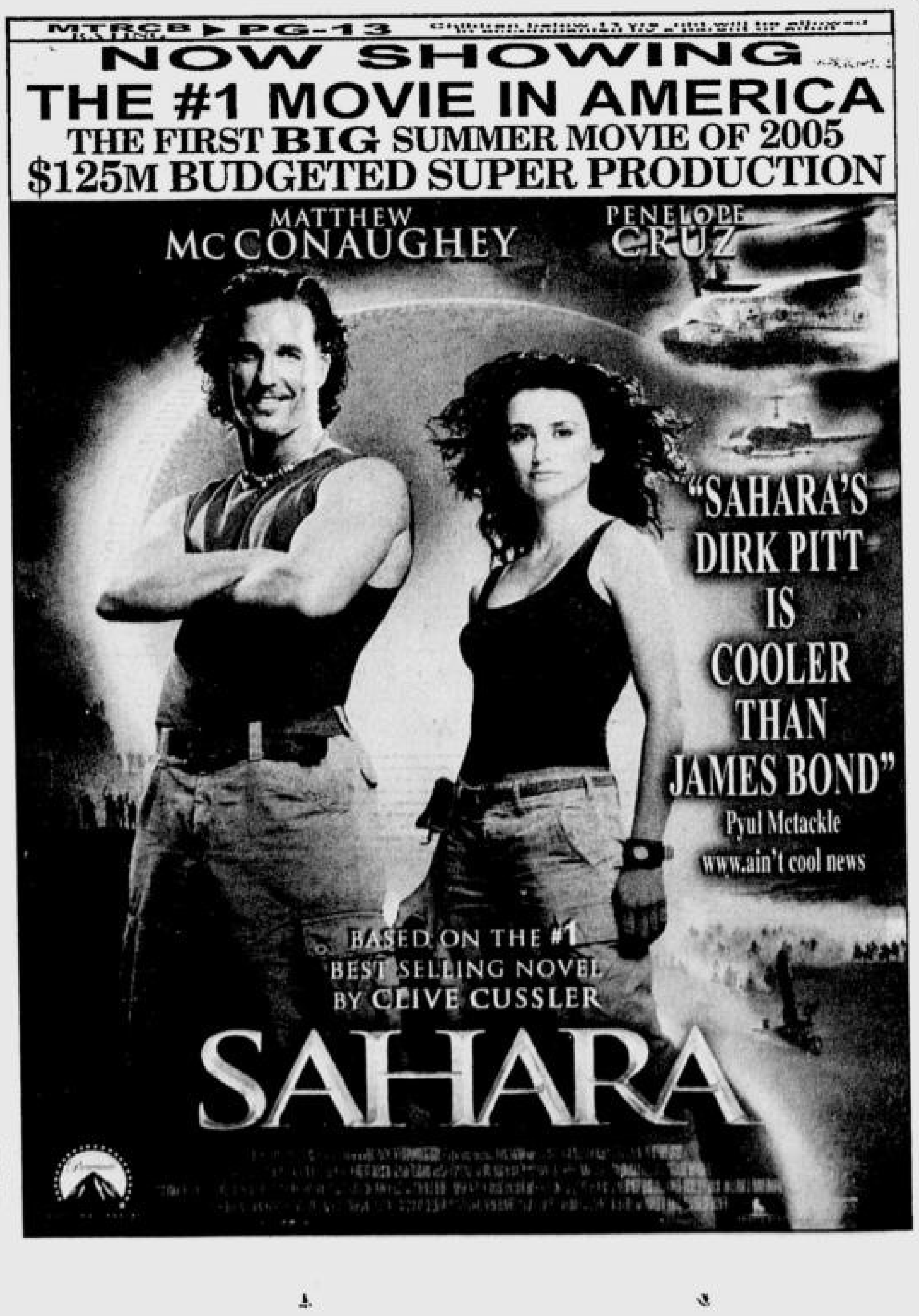
3 Pelukang Itim	1 Ong Bak	1 Legendary Street Fighter
4 Sahara	2 Pelukang Itim	2 Rental Reservation
5 Ong Bak	3 Under Renovation	
	4 Under Renovation	
	5 Sahara	
	6 Wedding Date	

OPENS APRIL 20
THE QUEST FOR THE *RING* CONTINUES...
A SPECTACULAR GIANT EPIC
NON-STOP ACTION, STUNNING VISUAL EFFECTS
AND A CAST OF THOUSANDS.
MTRCB RATING ▶PG-13 | STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND UP
The Nordic legend that inspired J.R.R. TOLKIEN to write
THE LORD OF THE RINGS TRILOGY
KRISTANNA LØKEN
(STAR OF TERMINATOR 3)
RING OF THE NIBELUNGS


OPENS APRIL 20
THIS MAN HAS DIED 27 TIMES
KEIRA KNIGHTLEY (King Arthur)
ADRIEN BRODY (King Kong)
A HAUNTING GHOST STORY IN THE TRADITION OF "THE SIXTH SENSE"
THE JACKET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THE #1 MOVIE IN AMERICA
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PENELOPE CRUZ
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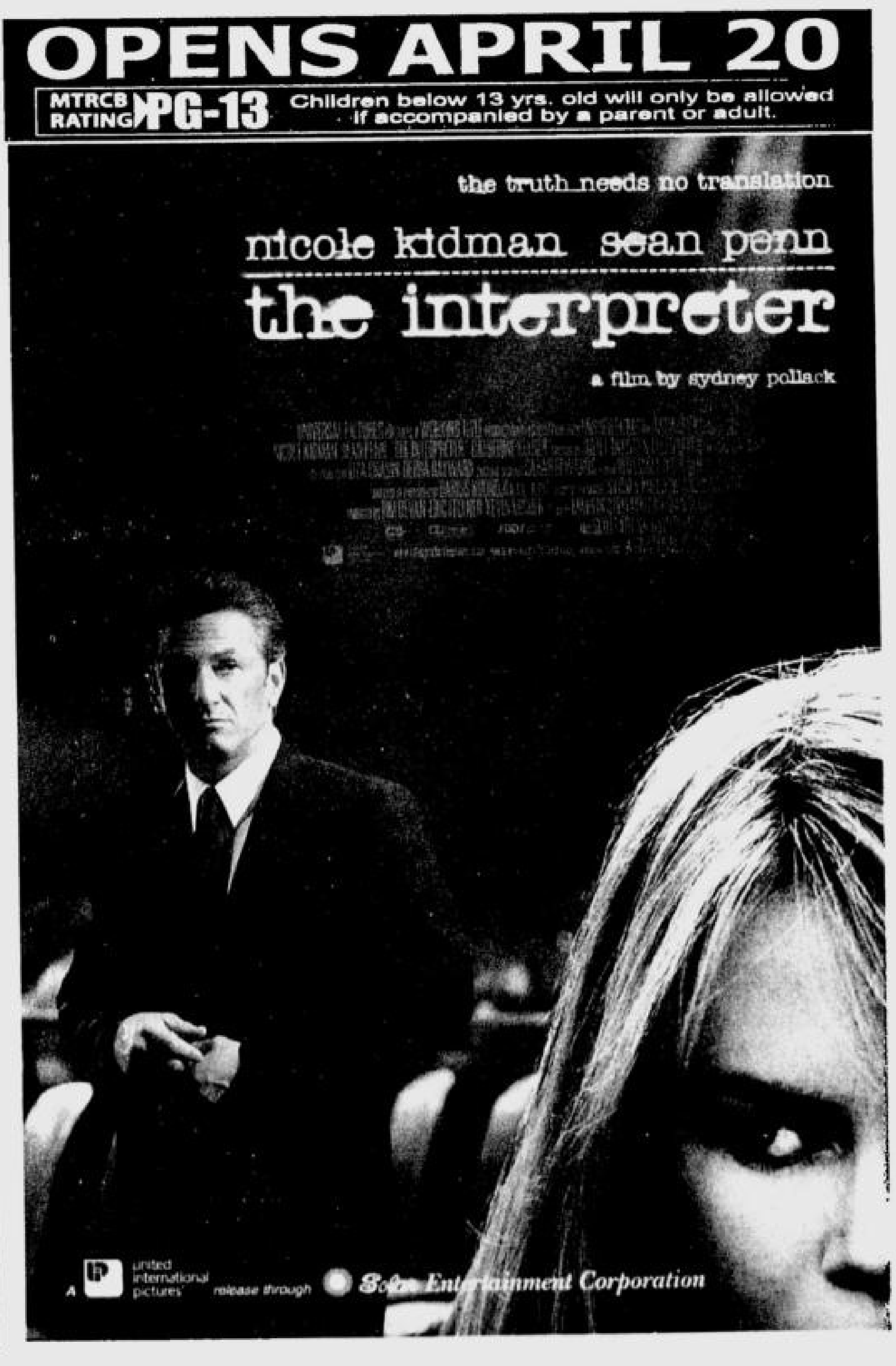
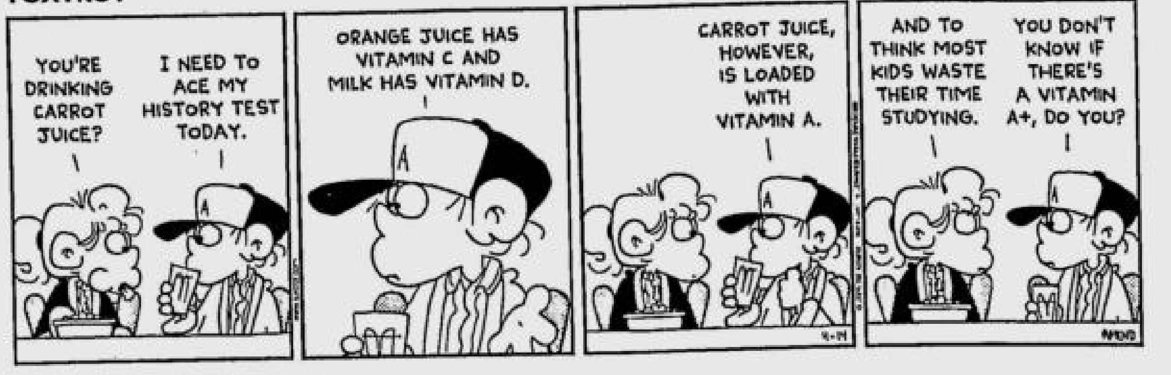
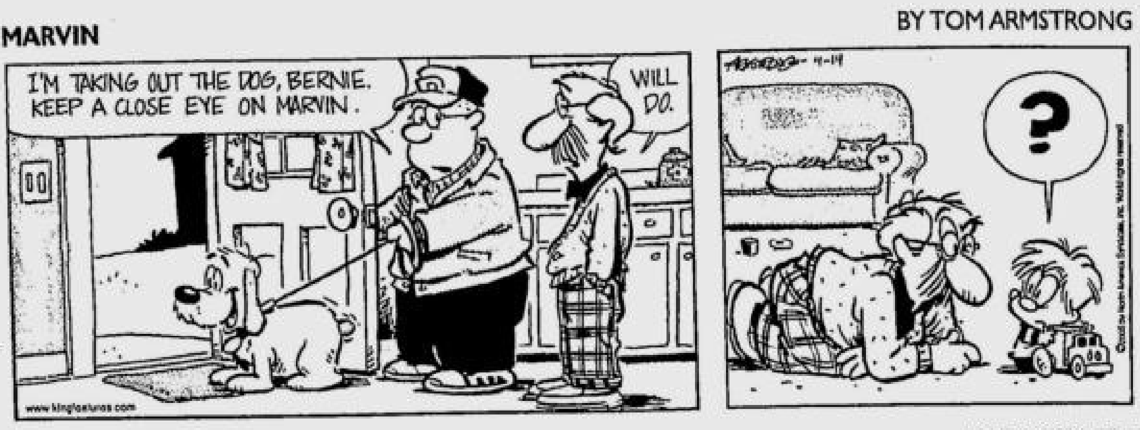
BASED ON THE #1 BEST SELLING NOVEL BY CLIVE CUSSLER
SAHARA


OPENS APRIL 20
MTRCB RATING ▶PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult.
the truth needs no translation
nicole kidman sean penn
the interpreter
a film by sydney pollack
A united international pictures release through Solar Entertainment Corporation

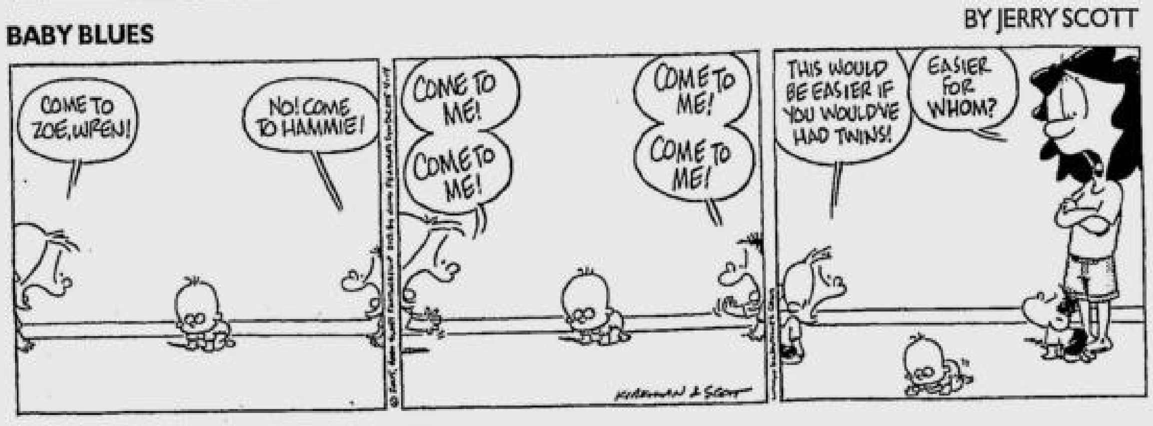
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


YOU'RE DRINKING CARROT JUICE?
I NEED TO ACE MY HISTORY TEST TODAY.
ORANGE JUICE HAS VITAMIN C AND MILK HAS VITAMIN D.
CARROT JUICE, HOWEVER, IS LOADED WITH VITAMIN A.
AND TO THINK MOST KIDS WASTE THEIR TIME STUDYING.
YOU DON'T KNOW IF THERE'S A VITAMIN A+, DO YOU?

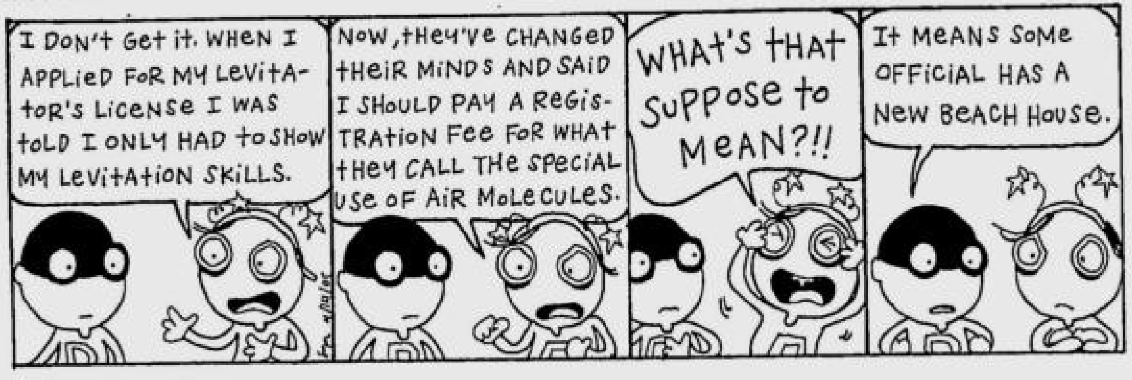
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I'M TAKING OUT THE DOG, BERNIE. KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON MARVIN.
WILL DO.
?
www.kingfeatures.com

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


COME TO ZOE, WREN!
NO! COME TO HAMMIE!
COME TO ME!
COME TO ME!
COME TO ME!
COME TO ME!
THIS WOULD BE EASIER IF YOU WOULD'VE HAD TWINS!
EASIER FOR WHOM?
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I DON'T GET IT. WHEN I APPLIED FOR MY LEVITATOR'S LICENSE I WAS TOLD I ONLY HAD TO SHOW MY LEVITATION SKILLS.
NOW, THEY'VE CHANGED THEIR MINDS AND SAID I SHOULD PAY A REGISTRATION FEE FOR WHAT THEY CALL THE SPECIAL USE OF AIR MOLECULES.
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSE TO MEAN?!!
IT MEANS SOME OFFICIAL HAS A NEW BEACH HOUSE.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You love tradition and history. You want respect and your proper place in society. You have a strong love of family, and often establish yourself in a reputable, stable way. When you want to be, you're extremely persuasive and powerful. In the year ahead, expect more solitude so that you can learn something important.

Birthdate of: Loretta Lynn, singer; Sarah Michelle Gellar, actress; Brad Garrett, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is a good time to think about how to improve your appearance and even your health. You might even want to think about how to improve your immune system.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Your ability to research and probe deeply for answers to old problems is excellent right now. You might also discover a few secrets! (Be discreet.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You could attract a very powerful person to you today. Quite possibly, you are the powerful person for somebody else. Either way, discussions are intense and memorable!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You have big ideas about how to improve things at work. You want to introduce reform. You want to make repairs to what is broken. (This is a good move.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You're attracted to new kinds of philosophies and ideas that seem to be a better way of looking at life. You want to improve your future in some way.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You're determined to use the resources available to you to make things better for yourself and others. Somebody else can help you do this right now. Perhaps you will use their possessions?

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You have a strong desire to improve others or make them over right now. In turn, somebody might do this you. Proceed gently. (People never really want to hear this stuff.)

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You can definitely make improvements at work. You see better ways of doing things. (One can always build a better mousetrap; then you get a better class of mice!)

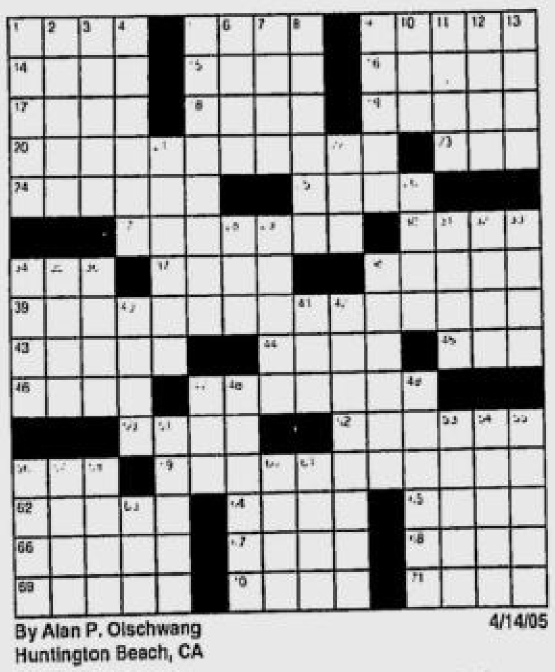
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): If you're involved in professional sports, you can improve your game now. Parents can also see better ways of helping and encouraging children.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Fix whatever is broken at home. It's a good time to make repairs. In a similar way, you might be able to fix bruised relationships within the family.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You're extremely convincing today! You can market, sell, teach, persuade, influence and express yourself with meaning and power. Oo-wah!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): This is a pretty good time to make money. You have excellent moneymaking ideas, and you have the drive and ambition to follow through on them. Go to it!

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA

4/14/05

ACROSS
- 1 Wag
- 5 Practical jokes
- 9 Throw out forcefully
- 14 On the quiet side
- 15 Sea eagle
- 16 Pentateuch
- 17 Author Morrison
- 18 Approach
- 19 Make amends
- 20 Start of Will Smith quote
- 23 Comprehend
- 24 Very dull performance
- 25 Capone's undoer
- 27 Red fish
- 30 Like it or __ it!
- 34 Mighty long time
- 37 Inter __ (among others)
- 38 Jots
- 39 Part 2 of quote
- 43 V-formation flock
- 44 Famous apple-splitter
- 45 Stolen or popular
- 46 Michael or Susannah
- 47 Director Noyce
- 50 Slide sideways
- 52 Plants with aromatic seeds
- 56 Vanity
- 59 End of quote
- 62 "Star Wars" weapon
- 64 Bread spread
- 65 Concluding passage
- 66 Spring bloom
- 67 Attain
- 68 At any time
- 69 Symbol of slowness
- 70 Plod along
- 71 Withered

DOWN
- 1 Spiteful
- 2 Island farewell
- 3 Begin again
- 4 Condescends
- 5 Army leaders
- 6 District
- 7 Teensy tormentor
- 8 Tranquil
- 9 French states
- 10 Iota
- 11 Aphrodite's child
- 12 Sugar source
- 13 Address for a Friend
- 21 Designate anew
- 22 Sun. homily
- 26 Gradual
- 28 Entertainer Zadora
- 29 Book div.
- 31 Provo's place
- 32 Irish county
- 33 Attention getter
- 34 Tense
- 35 Two-tone treat
- 36 __-do-well
- 38 Big Ten team
- 40 Invites
- 41 Underwater shocker
- 42 From the start
- 47 Play on words
- 48 Protagonists
- 49 Zodiac's twelfth sign
- 51 Staggering motion
- 53 Potbelly, e.g.
- 54 Duck down
- 55 Kind of crow?
- 56 Building additions
- 57 Runner Devers
- 58 Norway's largest city
- 60 Israeli airline
- 61 Dynamic leader?
- 63 Chow down

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

S	M	O	T	E	■	T	R	I	S	■	N	E	S	T
P	O	P	U	P	■	R	A	V	E	■	A	L	T	O
I	M	A	G	I	N	A	R	Y	N	U	M	B	E	R
N	A	H	■	D	I	C	E	■	T	R	E	A	T	Y
■	■	■	G	E	N	T	■	G	I	G	S	■	■	■
S	C	H	E	M	E	■	P	A	N	E	■	E	A	R
H	A	I	T	I	■	P	A	L	E	■	A	L	E	E
O	P	T	I	C	A	L	I	L	L	U	S	I	O	N
T	R	O	T	■	B	A	N	S	■	P	H	O	N	E
S	I	N	■	O	S	I	S	■	T	S	E	T	S	E
■	■	■	A	L	O	T	■	W	O	W	S	■	■	■
T	R	I	B	A	L	■	H	A	R	I	■	P	I	A
W	I	S	H	F	U	L	T	H	I	N	K	I	N	G
O	S	L	O	■	T	O	T	O	■	G	E	N	R	E
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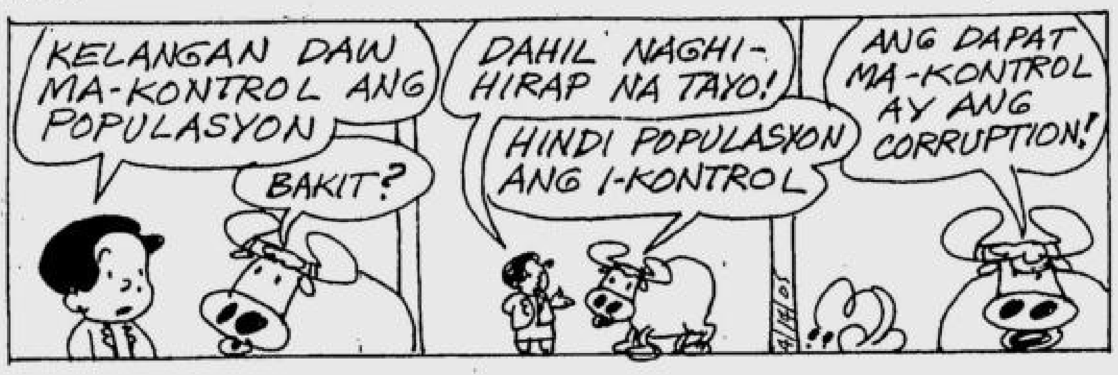
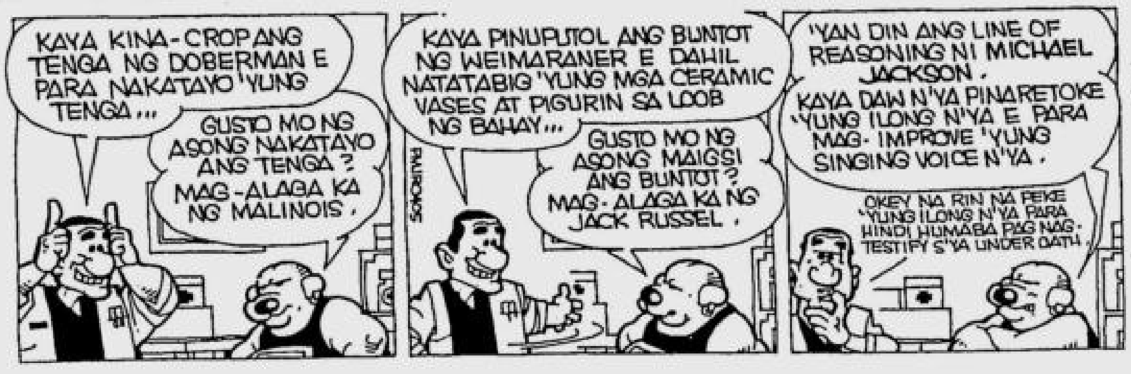
4/14/05

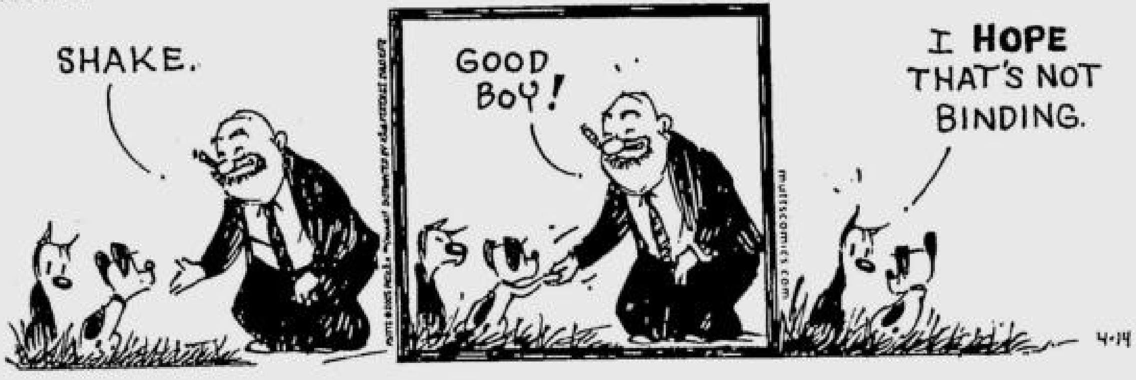
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


KELANGAN DAW MA-KONTROL ANG POPULASYON
BAKIT?
DAHIL NAGHIHIRAP NA TAYO!
HINDI POPULASYON ANG I-KONTROL
ANG DAPAT MA-KONTROL AY ANG CORRUPTION!

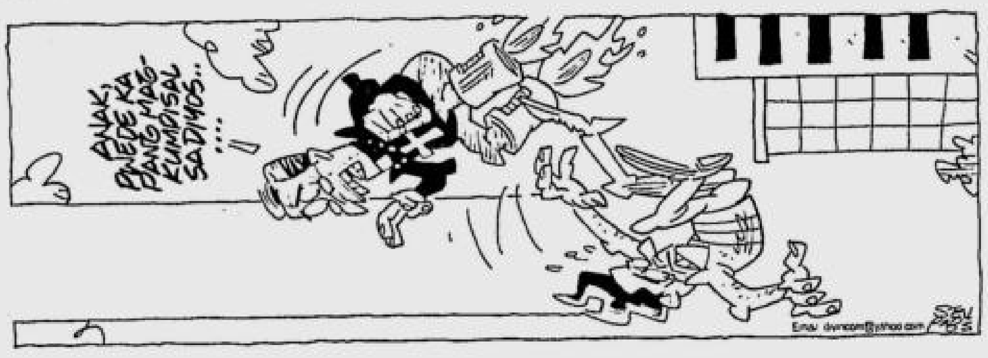
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


KAYA KINA-CROP ANG TENGA NG DOBERMAN E PARA NAKATAYO 'YUNG TENGA...
GUSTO MO NG ASONG NAKATAYO ANG TENGA? MAG-ALAGA KA NG MALINOIS.
KAYA PINUPUTOL ANG BUNTOT NG WEIMARANER E DAHIL NATATABIG 'YUNG MGA CERAMIC VASES AT PIGURIN SA LOOB NG BAHAY...
GUSTO MO NG ASONG MAIGSI ANG BUNTOT? MAG-ALAGA KA NG JACK RUSSEL.
'YAN DIN ANG LINE OF REASONING NI MICHAEL JACKSON.
KAYA DAW N'YA PINARETOKE 'YUNG ILONG N'YA E PARA MAG-IMPROVE 'YUNG SINGING VOICE N'YA.
OKEY NA RIN NA PEKE 'YUNG ILONG N'YA PARA HINDI HUMABA PAG NAG-TESTIFY S'YA UNDER OATH.

MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL

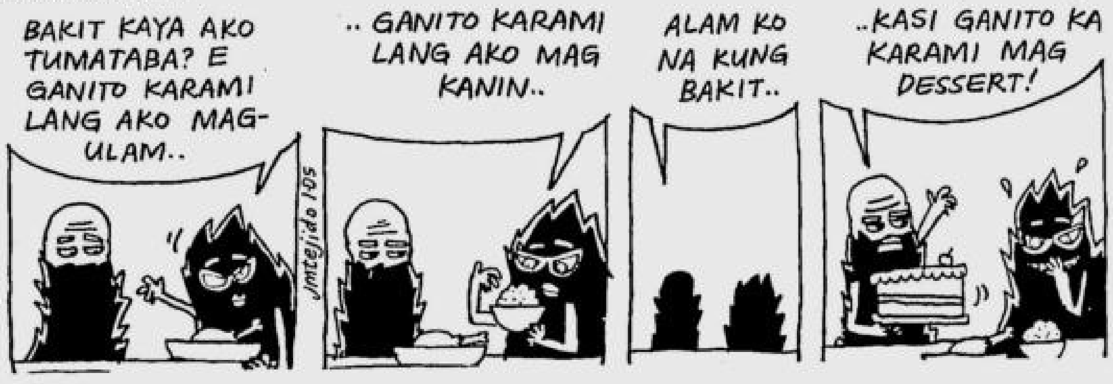

SHAKE.
GOOD BOY!
I HOPE THAT'S NOT BINDING.
muttscomics.com
4-14

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS

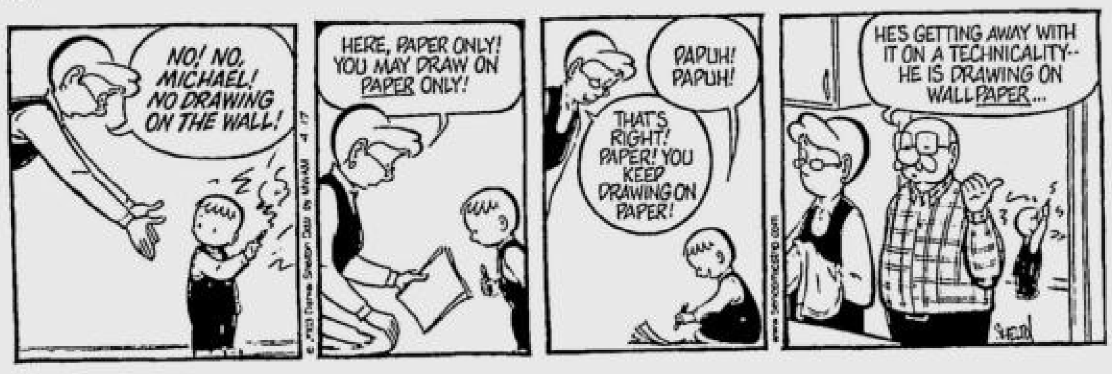

ANAK, PWEDE KA PANG MAG-KUMPISAL SA DIYOS...!
Email: divincom@yahoo.com

THE FAMOUS PRIEST IN MAKATI WHO TAKES CONFESSIONS FROM SUICIDES

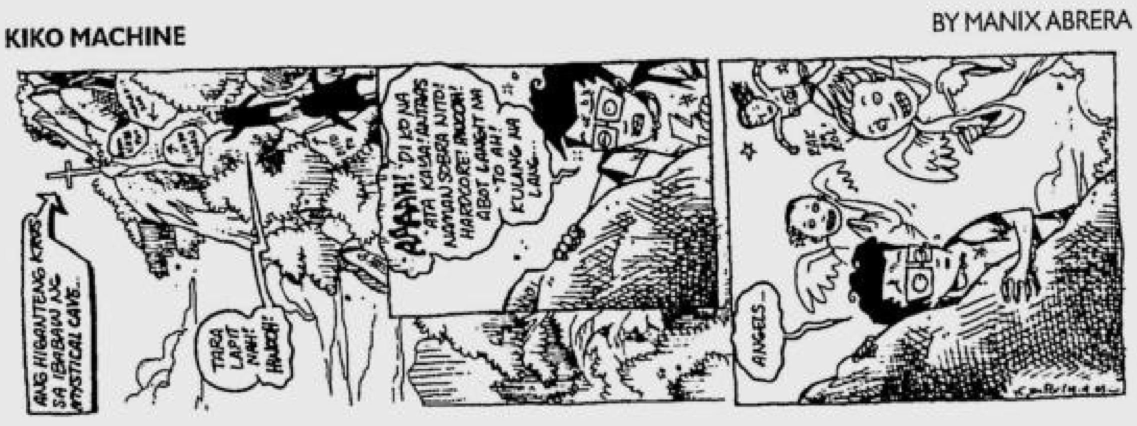
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


BAKIT KAYA AKO TUMATABA? E GANITO KARAMI LANG AKO MAG-ULAM..
..GANITO KARAMI LANG AKO MAG KANIN..
ALAM KO NA KUNG BAKIT..
..KASI GANITO KA KARAMI MAG DESSERT!
jmtejido '05

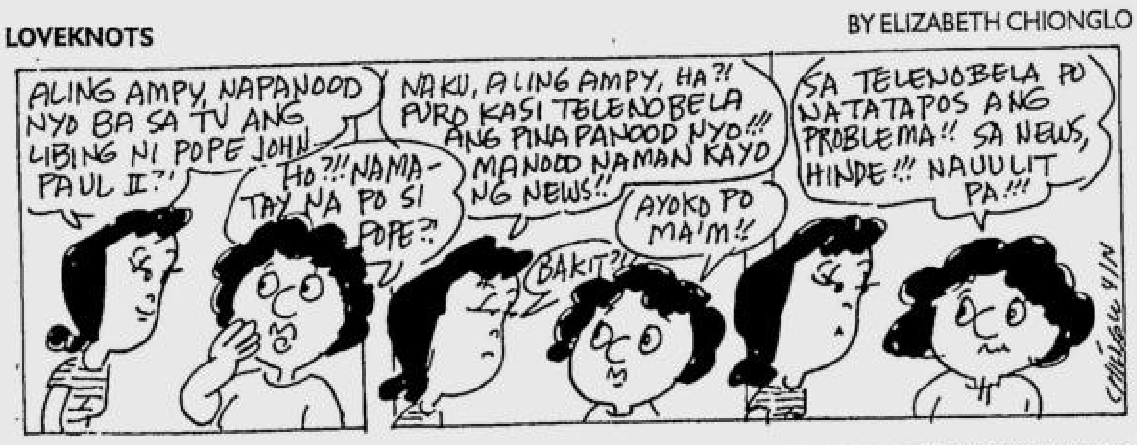
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


NO! NO, MICHAEL! NO DRAWING ON THE WALL!
HERE, PAPER ONLY! YOU MAY DRAW ON PAPER ONLY!
PAPUH! PAPUH!
THAT'S RIGHT! PAPER! YOU KEEP DRAWING ON PAPER!
HE'S GETTING AWAY WITH IT ON A TECHNICALITY-- HE IS DRAWING ON WALLPAPER...

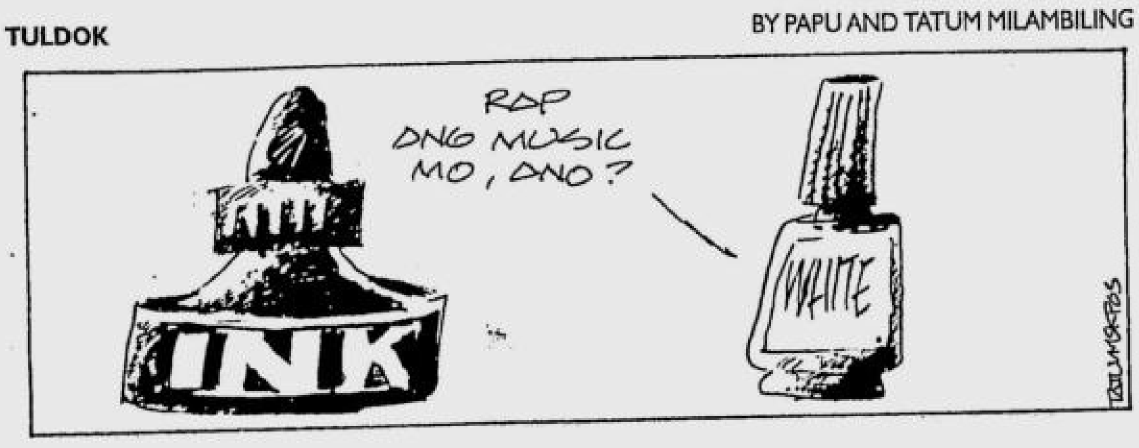
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


ANG HIGANTENG KRAS SA IBABAW NG MYSTICAL CAVE...
ANGELS...

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


ALING AMPY, NAPANOOD NYO BA SA TV ANG LIBING NI POPE JOHN PAUL II?!
HO?!! NAMATAY NA PO SI POPE?!
NAKU, ALING AMPY, HA?! PURO KASI TELENOBELA ANG PINAPANOOD NYO!!! MANOOD NAMAN KAYO NG NEWS!!
BAKIT?!
AYOKO PO MA'M!!
SA TELENOBELA PO NATATAPOS ANG PROBLEMA!! SA NEWS, HINDE!!! NAUULIT PA!!!

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


RAP ANG MUSIC MO, ANO?
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WHITE

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Match Series UPS
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THURSDAY,
APRIL 14, 2005
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BUSINESS

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5% ceiling on VAT refund pushed

By Michelle V. Remo

A 5-PERCENT cap on the allowable input VAT (value-added tax) credits of corporate taxpayers has been proposed in Congress to help address the government's weak VAT collections.

Rep. Herminio Teves, vice chair of the House committee on ways and means, said the government has had measly VAT collections from major industries because of their huge input VAT credits, which are deductible from their actual VAT liabilities.

Teves said that by putting a 5-percent cap on input VAT claims, the government stands to gain P90 billion in additional revenues a year.

Teves noted that on the average, the profitable telecommunications industry paid VAT equivalent to only 0.86 percent of their sales from 1999 to 2004, as compared with the 10-percent VAT rate. This was due to their claims of huge input VAT credits, which they said they gained from the purchase of telecommunication equipment.

"To add to this, Smart Communications Inc. and Globe Telecom, the leading telecom provider are still enjoying tax holidays up to July 2007 for Smart and May 2008 for Globe," he said in a privilege speech last Tuesday.

He explained that the tax holiday meant that the two telecommunication giants are exempted from paying income taxes despite the huge profits they registered in the past years.

The Lower House has already passed a bill seeking to reform the VAT system by raising the rate from 10 to 12 percent and by lifting several VAT exemptions. But Congress' bicameral conference committee has yet to finalize the bill as it awaits the version of the Senate.

The Arroyo administration has estimated that the VAT reform plan, its major revenue-raising measure intended to wipe out the government's budget deficit, will generate P60 billion in additional revenue a year.

Teves is proposing that the final version of the VAT reform bill should include a provision that will put a 5-percent cap on the allowable input VAT credits of corporate taxpayers. The cap, if implemented, would mean that companies could only claim input VAT credits equivalent to 5 percent of their sales.

The Department of Finance earlier expressed support to the proposal to limit input VAT credits, either by capping or by allowing companies to claim input VAT credits only in installment basis.

Finance Undersecretary Emmanuel Bonoan said limits on input VAT credits would enhance collection from VAT, whose loopholes are partly blamed for the government's weak revenue generation.

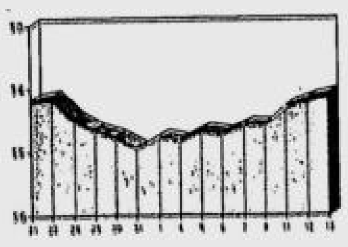
Aside from the huge input VAT claims, Teves said another problem on the VAT system was the zero-rating and exemption of some companies. A firm imposed a zero-VAT rating is not liable to pay output VAT, but are allowed to claim refunds for the input VAT they paid from the purchase of goods and services. This makes a zero-VAT rated firm more privileged than a merely VAT-exempt one.

5%/B5

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



₱54.10 = $1
As of 5 p.m., April 13, 2005

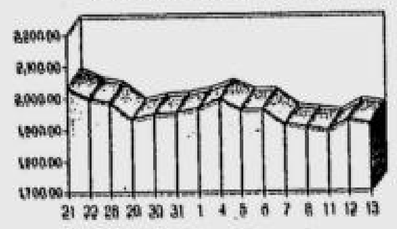
¥107.26 = $1
As of 5 p.m., April 13, 2005

GOLD: $429.30-429.80
per ounce Hong Kong, April 12, 2005

STOCK MARKET

Shares end lower; Metropolitan Bank, BPI lead fall

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



THE MAIN stock index ended lower yesterday, weighed down by losses in blue chips led by Metropolitan Bank and Bank of the Philippine Islands, traders said.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index closed down 11.24 points, or 0.6 percent, at 1,916.58, after rising 1.6 percent Tuesday.

The commercial-industrial, all shares, banks and financial services, and property subindexes finished lower, while the oil, and mining subindicators ended higher.

The selloff wasn't broad-based as some stocks continued to draw bargain-hunters, traders said. Gainers led decliners 38 to 36, while 51 stocks were unchanged.

AP

Actual budget deficit in '04 at ₱187.06B

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL government has revised upward its budget-deficit figure for last year to P187.06 billion due to adjustments in the computation of revenues and expenditures.

The revised deficit was P957 million higher than the previously reported P186.1 billion, although it was still within the P197.8-billion deficit ceiling set by the government for 2004. The better-than-programmed budget deficit for 2004 earlier prompted the DOF to predict that the medium-term goal of wiping out the budget deficit by 2010 would be accelerated.

The 2004 deficit was equivalent to 3.9 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) for the year. Nominal GDP for 2004 was at P4.84 trillion.

According to documents from the Department of Finance, revenues for 2004 were actually higher at P699.8 billion compared with the P698.3 billion announced earlier. Actual revenue collection surpassed the government's target of P676.5 billion.

Of the revenues, tax collection by the Bureau of Internal Revenue accounted for P468.18 billion while collections by the Bureau of Customs reached P122.47 billion. Tax revenues by other government agencies amounted to P7.36 billion, while non-tax revenues reached P101.75 billion. Non-tax revenues included income from the Bureau of Treasury, fees charged imposed by government agencies, gains from privatization and grants.

But the upward revision in revenues was offset by the adjustment in expenditures, which the DOF said also stood higher at P886.8 billion compared with the

ACTUAL/B5

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- April 11-16, 2005: Pascual Bldg., Brgy. 1, National Highway, San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte
- April 11-17, 2005: DRT Highway, Sto. Cristo, Pulilan, Bulacan (Between Max's & Equitable Bank)
- April 11-17, 2005: Caltex Service Station, McArthur Highway, Tikay, Malolos, Bulacan
- April 11-17, 2005: Balanga Plaza, Balanga City Hall, Bataan
- April 14-15, 2005: Sto. Niño Shell Station 2, Don A. Bernao Ave., Ozamis City, Misamis Occidental
- April 14-16, 2005: Shell Uptown Service Station, Alunan Ave., Koronadal City, South Cotabato
- April 14-16, 2005: Calamba Central Market, Brgy. Rizal St., Legaspi City, Albay
- April 15-17, 2005: Ormoc Super Shell, Lilia Ave., Cogon, Ormoc City
- April 15-17, 2005: Cadiz, MS Shell Corp., Villena St., Cadiz City, Negros Occidental
- April 15-17, 2005: Gaisano City Mall, Roxas City, Capiz

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BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

WORD is out that the SEC intends to take over the country's biggest pre-need company, the College Assurance Plan, or CAP.

CAP has about 790,000 plan holders. What will happen to them? Well, when the SEC takes over, we better take cover. SEC takeovers always left people pining.

Those plan holders can always keep their fingers crossed, but as far as I can remember, the SEC is not exactly the best manager of any business. Except monkey business, of course!

At the moment, as if it's any comfort to those plan holders, the SEC is not yet entirely in full control of CAP. The SEC only assigned an "oversight committee" to CAP.

The "oversight committee" came about because the SEC, from out of the blue about four years ago, determined that it had just obtained the divine gift of omniscience.

Ably assisting its gift to know everything was the SEC's own idea of itself as also having the divine gift of prophecy.

* * *

AND so, the SEC put the "oversight committee" in CAP because the SEC predicted that CAP would probably be in trouble in, oh, only about 20 to 30 years from now.

To help CAP avoid trouble way into the future, the SEC created the "oversight committee," and it ordered CAP to pay the committee some P50,000 every month.

To the "oversight committee," however, the amount was such a bargain that the SEC ordered CAP to give the committee P100,000 every month instead.

There, double your money, just like that! And everybody thought that the SEC thought that CAP was going to have money trouble!

It will be in trouble, all right, only because of the SEC itself.

* * *

BUT let's say that CAP indeed will have money problems way, much way, into the future. Is the SEC takeover—i.e. the dreaded liquidation—the best solution?

Again, the question is, what will happen to the CAP plan holders? Some groups tried to sell me the line that "liquidation" is the best recourse for the plan holders.

Oh yeah? They must think that I was just born yesterday, and not 28 years ago. Okay, 40 years ago! Well, 50 years?

Anyway, whenever the SEC took over a business, the first one to make money was always the receiver, the one who was supposed to take care of the assets.

If CAP will have money problems way into the future, based on the SEC's questionable method of computing the FUTURE liabilities of the company, does it not deserve help, first, as in right now, at this very instant?

I mean, come on, if a bank has a little liquidity problem, the government is always the first to help it. You don't want PANIC in the market, that's why.

In the case of CAP, how come the government's immediate reaction is to take over the business? Do you think it's because some groups in New York are still interested in the company? Me, too.

* * *

STILL, the biggest question is, whether or not CAP is really in trouble today, and whether or not it will be in trouble 20 to 30 years from today.

CAP has about P9 billion in trust funds with the banks, and they are big banks—i.e. reputable. I mean, they will not lie about the CAP funds being with them.

Definitely, CAP is not in any kind of money trouble today. It can always use the trust funds.

But can its P9 billion in trust funds take care of all its payments to plan holders, say, some 20 to 30 years from today?

Nobody can say that for sure, really, not even the SEC, and not even if the SEC switches to a religion in which it thinks it is an all-knowing god.

For that's what the dispute is all about between the SEC and CAP. The SEC insists that CAP could be in trouble 20 to 30 years from today. CAP does not agree.

The SEC therefore takes over the business. Simple.

* * *

BUT then again, somebody in the SEC itself also does not agree with what the SEC is doing to CAP. That somebody is none other than SEC Commissioner Jesus Enriquez Martinez himself.

In fact, Martinez wrote to Sen. Edgardo Angara, chair of the committee on banks, financial institutions and currencies, wanting to "shed light on the current confused state of the actuarial treatment of pre-need trust funds."

"Actuarial" has nothing to do with "actors" and "burial." It is complicated mathematics. It tries to predict the FUTURE liabilities of companies like pre-needs.

Martinez even called the SEC method of computing FUTURE liabilities of pre-need companies as a "modus operandi."

And he told Angara that if the modus operandi continues, "the demise of a noble Fil-

BREAKTIME/ B3

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CIE Academy for Leadership and Continuing Education
A one-on-one family counseling follows after the seminar

APRIL 19, 2005 - 8:00 a.m.
Continuation of one-on-one family counseling with Mr. Dan Kelch regarding "Study in the USA" and "G.E.T. Program" at RCBC

CEBU

APRIL 19, 2005 - 6:00 p.m.
CITY SPORTS CLUB CEBU, Cebu City
Colon & Magallanes Rooms
A one-on-one family counseling follows after the seminar

APRIL 20, 2005 - 8:00 a.m.
Continuation of one-on-one family counseling with Mr. Dan Kelch regarding "Study in the USA" and "G.E.T. Program" at the CIE Main Campus along Pres. Magsaysay St., Cebu City

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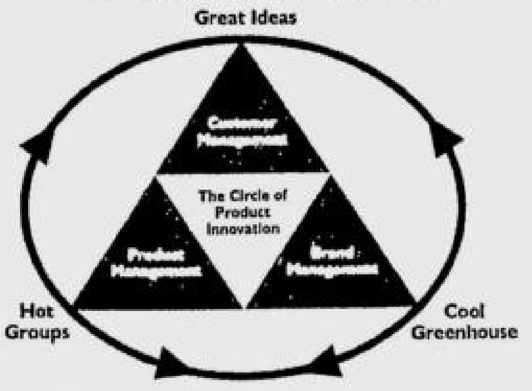

IDEAS AHEAD

Program Outline

8.30 am - 9.00 am	Registration
9.00 am - 11.00 am	The Marketing Trilogy: Product-Brand-Customer Management
11.00 am - 11.30 am	Coffee Break
11.30 am - 1.00 pm	The Art of Innovation
1.00 pm - 2.00 pm	Networking Lunch Break
2.00 pm - 3.00 pm	Lesson From Philippine's Innovative Company: Philippine Long Distance telephone (PLDT) Guest Speaker Mr. Menandro Jimenez Jr., SVP Corporate Communications
3.00 pm - 3.30 pm	Coffee Break
3.30 pm - 5.00 pm	Think Creative Organization: Great Ideas, Hot Groups and Cool Green House

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President of World marketing Association (WMA)
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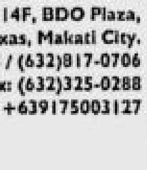

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Fax: (632)325-0288
Mobile: +639175003127

DISCLOSURES

ASIATRUST Development Bank entered into a Deed of Absolute Sale of various Real estate and other properties owned and acquired (Ropoa) to RIS (SPV-AMC) Inc. Special Purpose Vehicle - Asset Management Co. for the transfer/sale of Ropoa with a total book value of P177.23 million.

* * *

JARDINE-Davies Inc. announced the resignation of James Riley as director.

* * *

UNITED Paragon Mining Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on July 29, 10 a.m. Only stockholders of record date as of May 30 are entitled to vote at the meeting. The agenda and venue of the meeting will be announced later.

* * *

PHILWEB Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 31, 3 p.m. at the 17th Floor Tower I, The Enterprise Center, 6766 Ayala Ave., Makati City. Only stockholders of record date as of April 26 are entitled to vote at the meeting.

* * *

ISM Communications Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 31, 5 p.m. at the 17th Floor, Tower I, Enterprise Center, 6766 Ayala Ave., Makati City. Only stockholders of record date as of April 26 are entitled to vote at the meeting.

* * *

HOLCIM Philippines Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 27, 10 a.m. at the Ballroom, Mandarin Oriental Manila, Makati Avenue, Makati City.

Compiled by Chona Galang, PDI Research

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of April 13, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.8	3.95	3.7	3.7	50,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	27	27.5	26.5	27	2,757,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	50.5	50.5	49	49.5	692,700
China Banking Corp.	650	655	650	655	1,040
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.78	0.81	0.78	0.78	13,300,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	48	48	47	47	56,800
International Exch. Bank	18.5	18.5	18.5	18.5	25,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	33.5	34	31.5	32.5	1,330,400
Philippine National Bank	31.5	31.5	31.5	31.5	44,800
Security Bank Corp.	28	28.5	27.5	28.5	69,500
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	1.92	1.92	1.92	1.92	12,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	2,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2510	2530	2510	2530	1,030
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	275,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1710	1710	1690	1690	430
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	15.25	15.5	15.25	15.5	6,700
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.14	1.18	6,330,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	850	855	850	855	690
Ipeople Inc.	4.6	4.8	4.6	4.8	6,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	7,000,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	10,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.08	2.1	2.08	2.08	10,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.35	3.35	3.3	3.3	1,005,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1395	1405	1395	1395	134,450
Ivantage Corp.	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	660,000
Philweb Corp.	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	4,900,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	17.75	17.75	17.5	17.5	16,500
Manila Electric Co. B	24.75	24.75	24.5	24.5	314,200
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.4	6.5	6.4	6.4	2,935,000
Petron Corp.	3.6	3.6	3.55	3.6	91,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.3	1.3	1.28	1.28	95,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.88	1.88	1.88	1.88	5,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	7.2	7.3	7.2	7.2	700,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	80,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.65	0.74	0.65	0.73	9,480,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.3	198,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.45	3.45	3.4	3.4	15,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	13,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	28.5	29	28	28	46,100
RFM Corp.	0.91	0.96	0.9	0.96	90,000
San Miguel Corp. A	58	58	57.5	58	188,500
San Miguel Corp. B	82	82.5	81.5	82.5	525,300
Universal Robina Corp.	12	12	12	12	1,300
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	470,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	1,000,000
Ayala Corp.	7.4	7.4	7.2	7.2	318,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.7	4.75	4.7	4.75	573,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	400,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.1	2.12	2.1	2.12	318,000
APC Group Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	100,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0075	0.008	0.0075	0.0075	115,000,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	14.75	14.75	14.75	14.75	15,200
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.175	0.18	0.175	0.18	350,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.16	1.08	1.1	21,587,000
A Brown Co. Inc.	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	20,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	50,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.25	1,620,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.4	0.4	0.39	0.39	800,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.05	3.05	3	3	425,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.047	0.0525	0.047	0.05	13,100,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	134,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	60,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	49.5	49.5	49	49.5	276,100
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	20,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.09	0.095	0.09	0.095	400,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1,394,000
Ionics Inc.	1.42	1.5	1.42	1.5	126,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.3	3.3	3.25	3.25	73,000
Macroasia Corp.	1.94	2	1.94	1.98	150,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.38	1.38	1.36	1.36	2,460,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	1	1	1	1	300,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.45	0.45	0.44	0.44	10,730,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	5,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	90,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	120,000
SM Investments Corp.	249	250	248	250	1,149,400
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.21	0.26	0.21	0.26	165,620,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	560,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Active Alliance Inc.	1.88	2.04	1.8	1.8	432,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	145,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.13	1,500,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1.36	1.36	1.32	1.34	3,872,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1	1.02	1	1.02	1,080,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.64	1.66	1.62	1.64	7,584,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.31	0.31	900,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	15	15.25	15	15	1,005,600
PLDT (10% Pref) Series M	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series O	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series P	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Q	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	3,600
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	6,800
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	8	8	7.9	8	3,725,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.52	20,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.93	0.95	0.93	0.95	1,020,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	920,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	1,070,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.46	0.46	0.45	0.45	6,720,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.46	1.46	842,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.57	10,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	30,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.16	0.165	0.16	0.165	370,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	4.5	4.75	4.5	4.75	26,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	100,000
SM Development Corp.	1.68	1.74	1.64	1.64	193,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.7	7.7	7.6	7.6	2,870,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	20,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.2	187,000
Benguet Corp. A	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6	3,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.34	7,410,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.35	5,770,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.016	0.017	0.015	0.016	113,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.021	0.023	0.021	0.023	132,200,000
Omico Corp.	0.0075	0.0085	0.0075	0.008	395,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.08	1.08	1.04	1.04	1,441,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.3	1.34	1.3	1.3	3,375,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	33	34.5	33	34	269,800
OIL					
Interport Res. B	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	2,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	79,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	8,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	20,000
Pacifica	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.014	10,000,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.2	0.2	0.19	0.19	4,500,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	18,618,200	173,144,040.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	391,180,540	716,566,580.00
PRO	17,916,000	58,032,310.00
Mining	658,675,800	28,441,320.00
OIL	103,520,000	1,556,600.00
GRAND TOTALS:	1,189,910,540	977,740,850.00

	AVERAGES	
Bank & Fin Svc	560.42	DOWN 10.30
Comm'l & Ind'l	3,022.15	DOWN 8.36
PRO	728.84	DOWN .64
Mining	2,956.14	UP 30.89
OIL	2.46	UP 0.02
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	1,174.64	DOWN 0.22
Composite	1,916.58	DOWN 11.24

NO. OF ADVANCES: 38, NO. OF DECLINES: 36, NO. OF UNCHANGED: 51, NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 125, NO. OF TRADES: 3,111

CURRENCIES

April 13, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.774174	1.000000	54.1980
Japan	Yen	0.007187	0.009283	0.5031
United Kingdom	Pound	1.464504	1.891700	102.5264
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.099266	0.128222	6.9494
Switzerland	Franc	0.645682	0.834028	45.2026
Canada	Dollar	0.625595	0.808081	43.7964
Singapore	Dollar	0.470336	0.607533	32.9271
Australia	Dollar	0.598140	0.772618	41.8744
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.053565	2.652590	143.7651
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.206441	0.266660	14.4524
Brunei	Dollar	0.468912	0.605694	32.8274
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000081	0.000105	0.0057
Thailand	Baht	0.019535	0.025234	1.3676
UAE	Dirham	0.210786	0.272272	14.7566
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.291700	70.0076
Argentina	Peso	0.267880	0.346021	18.7536
Brazil	Real	0.298275	0.385282	20.8815
Denmark	Kroner	0.134260	0.173424	9.3992
India	Rupee	0.017715	0.022883	1.2402
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.203757	0.263193	14.2645
Mexico	New Peso	0.069909	0.090302	4.8942
New Zealand	Dollar	0.555760	0.717875	38.9074
Norway	Kroner	0.122189	0.157831	8.5541
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013042	0.016846	0.9130
South Africa	Rand	0.125882	0.162602	8.8127
Korea	Won	0.000762	0.000984	0.0533
Sweden	Kroner	0.109378	0.141283	7.6573
Syria	Pound	0.014914	0.019264	1.0441
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024484	0.031626	1.7141
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000361	0.000466	0.0253

CAP sets out to build up capital anew

TROUBLED pre-need firm College Assurance Plan Philippines Inc. has announced that it is again embarking on a capital build-up program to replenish its shrinking trust fund.

A ranking official of the company yesterday told reporters that CAP might issue peso-denominated bonds equivalent to $50 million to replace the MRT bonds which it sold earlier to fund tuition fee payments.

The company's trust fund is a pool of assets put up to assure plan holders that the pre-need firm has funds to settle maturing plans.

The company is also in talks with "several groups" for a $25-$50 million long-term loan. It is also negotiating with Europe-based investment house International Global Holdings for a $25-million equity infusion in exchange for preferred shares and a board seat in the pre-need firm.

CAP is set to meet with the SEC today to present its plans. An SEC committee overseeing the financial condition of CAP has recommended that a management committee take over the troubled pre-need firm, informed sources had said.

SEC chair Fe Barin had warned CAP not to withdraw from its trust fund, which has been depleted to around P4.7 billion based on the SEC's computations from P8.5 billion last year to pay off liabilities to plan holders.

Barin had said the Commission en Banc would decide on one of the recommendations of the oversight committee on CAP this week.

CAP's license to sell education plans was suspended last year as it struggled to find fresh capital to address its trust fund deficit.

Barin said that CAP would have to pay roughly P2.5 billion in tuition fee payments per school year, or P1.2 billion at least for this coming semester.

With the fund currently pegged at P4.7 billion, the estimated life of the trust fund would be two years. The figure did not include existing plans that holders would continue to pay in installments. The payments in turn would go directly to the fund.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

Pacific Plans files for rehabilitation

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE PRE-NEED firm Pacific Plans Inc. (PPI) of the Yuchengco family has filed for suspension of payments and rehabilitation with a Makati court, saying it may not be able to pay future claims because tuition fees have been increasing at a tremendous rate ever since the government removed the 10-percent cap on tuition hikes in 1990, the company said in a statement.

PPI officials however stressed that, for the moment, the firm could still make tuition fee payments.

The Makati court yesterday issued a stay order, effectively freezing all PPI payments to creditors, suppliers, and plan holders until the company is rehabilitated.

The company also asked, and was allowed, to pay the current tuition of its beneficiaries.

The beneficiaries would get only tuition support. This means that for non-exclusive schools, beneficiaries would get roughly the same amount they got during their last availment.

Those in exclusive schools would get much less than their last claim because their tuition is roughly double that of non-exclusive schools.

According to Securities and Exchange Commission chair Fe Barin, the regulator is still awaiting submissions from the pre-need firm.

PPI has 34,000 plan holders with roughly 16,000 of them filing educational claims for the school year 2005-2006.

In its rehabilitation petition filed with a Makati regional trial court last week, the company said it had P341 million in cash for the current enrollment period. Checks would be released starting today, April 14.

PPI said that while its ability to pay future claims was doubtful, it could return the money paid by the plan holders, plus a net return of 7 percent per year from the date the plan was fully paid.

This would be done by replacing their open-ended plans with fixed-value plans which can be encashed by July 2010, when the government bonds in PPI's trust funds mature.

PPI's trust fund is estimated at roughly $50 million, consisting mostly of government bonds maturing in 2010.

Open-ended education plans refer to plans where the company promises to pay tuition fees at any rate, compared with fixed value plans.

Each time benefits were paid to almost 16,000 "availing" plan holders, the funds would shrink to the prejudice of the 18,000 who would file their respective claims years later, the petition said.

"The deregulation of tuition fees (in the 1990s) has caused a tremendous rise in the cost of education, which in turn put an enormous pressure on traditional (open-ended) plans and their respective trust funds considering that pre-need companies dealing in such securities could not pass on the additional cost to their plan holders," the company said in its petition.

PPI stopped selling this type of plan in 1992, realizing that it would be a matter of time before the gap between tuition and its income would affect the company the way it did now.

The SEC ordered pre-need firms to stop selling this type of education plan 10 years later because of the same concerns.

The company has appealed to plan holders who are not claiming tuition support this school year not to go to the PPI offices to allow the smooth processing and release of checks.

PNCC names new chair/CEO

THE BOARD of Philippine National Construction Corp. has elected Arthur Aguilar, general manager of National Development Co., as chair and chief executive officer of the state-owned toll operator.

Aguilar's appointment as PNCC chair and director was disclosed to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday.

PNCC accepted the resignation of Pastor Ramos Jr. as chair and CEO during a board meeting on Monday.

The state agency said Aguilar would replace Ramos as chair while occupying the board seat vacated by Basilio Cruz Jr. Abraham Purugganan was also appointed director and he would take the board seat of Ramos.

Aguilar was assigned one share of the company while Purugganan was assigned 50 shares, PNCC said in the disclosure.

Sources said Trade and Industry Secretary Juan Santos endorsed Aguilar for the PNCC position. PNCC was transferred from the finance department to the trade department last July.

Ramos was appointed to the PNCC when the agency was still under the finance department, then headed by Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong in 2004.

"It is normal in any new organization to undergo changes. There is a new trade secretary and he has the mandate to choose the new agency heads," said Ramos in an interview.

Early this year, the PNCC board headed by Ramos decided to nullify its joint venture with Hopewell Crown Infrastructure Inc., citing the alleged financial incapacity of the consortium.

Clarissa S. Batino

KLM gets additional flight entitlements

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE CIVIL Aeronautics Board has allowed KLM Royal Dutch Airlines to fly to and from Manila daily in a bid to boost the traffic between the Philippines and Europe.

Prior to this, KLM used to fly between Manila and Amsterdam five times a week.

"We want to improve the access to the country of European tourists by increasing direct flights between Europe and the Philippines," said CAB executive director Tomas Manalac in an interview.

KLM Royal Dutch officials held talks with the CAB in October last year for the increase in flight frequency.

"The Philippine market is growing and we see enormous growth in both inbound and outbound traffic. Eventually, we will be able fly to and from the Philippines twice daily and use bigger aircraft. We hope the government would grant us additional entitlements," said KLM executive vice president Paul Gregorowitsch during last year's visit.

In 1998, there were eight airlines serving the Manila-Europe route. These were British Airways, Swissair, Air France, KLM, Alitalia, Lufthansa, Aeroflot and Philippine Airlines. These carriers operated a combined 39 flights a week between Manila and seven European capitals, 12 of them non-stop services.

Today, the only ones left are Air France, KLM and Lufthansa and they fly less than 20 times weekly to a few European cities.

The CAB records showed that while European carriers were given an estimated weekly seat entitlement of 19,660, only 4,115 (21 percent of the total) are being used.

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AUCTION DATE: APRIL 17, 2005 (SUNDAY) 10:30 AM
INSPECTION DATES: APRIL 15-16, 2005, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
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721-3233 / 723-3277 / 299-8333 / 299-8318

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From page B2

ipino business invention is more than certain."

* * *

CONGRESS is conducting hearings on the pre-need industry, trying to find out whether or not the SEC did wrong in imposing new rules on pre-need companies.

Those rules are a couple of years old. It was done at the time Senator Mar Roxas was still secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Even when he was still a congressman, Roxas had been trying to put the pre-need industry under the supervision of the Insurance Commission, instead of the SEC.

When he was DTI secretary, Roxas also commissioned a top-secret "study," which eventually showed that the pre-need firm CAP would have trouble way into the future.

The top-secret study was done by a US-based lobby group called Agile, which got its funding from the USAID, and not exactly from a big financial group in New York.

* * *

ANYWAY, according to Martinez, back in 2002, the Society of Actuaries of America came out with its "comprehensive" paper on the proper financial reporting of pre-needs in the Philippines.

It said that in pre-needs, the element of mortality or morbidity is insignificant. Meaning, for instance, the education plan holders will not just go to college all at once because of a freak accident.

Therefore, the paper said, pre-needs must be treated as investments, much like the securities that banks offer to the public, and not as "insurance," which was what the SEC actually preferred.

Martinez noted that the paper came out in December 2002, and he said that the date was significant.

That was around the time when the SEC was formulating the new rules on pre-needs, which are now the very same contentious rules between CAP and SEC.

You would think, according to Martinez, that the SEC would have considered the paper. No, sir, it did not. On the contrary, the SEC went directly against the paper.

Here's what the SEC rules say: "Because the price of a pre-need plan is paid long before the benefit or service to be rendered is due, the accounting for revenues, expenditures, assets and liabilities for pre-need, is similar to the accounting for long duration contracts like those of insurance."

* * *

AIDED by the US-funded Agile, SEC lawyers and accountants wrote the new rules, requiring pre-need companies to put up gargantuan reserves like life insurance companies.

That was the birth of the famous ARL, the "actuarial reserve liabilities," which pre-need companies must cover or else ...

In the case of CAP, the SEC asked it to cover for some P2.5 billion in ARL, which was again based on SEC computation.

CAP questioned the amount, but the company nevertheless funded it.

The following year, the SEC raised the amount to P7 billion, and CAP also questioned it but still funded it.

On the third year, the SEC went for broke and raised the amount to P18 billion.

I don't know if CAP became suspicious finally, but that was the start of this ongoing war between CAP and the SEC, plus of course the SEC supporters, like the Makati crowd. Take a bow, Raul!

* * *

NOW, in his letter to Congress, Martinez pointed out that there is no reliable way today to estimate the so-called ARL.

And he is right, because the estimate of the SEC-accredited actuary was off by as much as 48 percent for CAP at one time.

That simply means that, based on the SEC rules, CAP had to put up funding for 48 percent of an amount it did not need to put up funding for.

Martinez pointed out that many factors could actually contribute to the FUTURE liabilities of pre-need companies.

But the SEC rules used only one, which was based on the interest rate of government securities, which even some banks do not use because the rate is unreliable.

Anyway, "using one single rate to compute the present value of liabilities in the next 30 years," Martinez told Congress, "is utterly unreasonable."

Which is why the SEC insists on doing it.

LIGHT
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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
ITB No. 01-087-05

The Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA) invites interested contractors only with PCAB license Small B Category to apply for eligibility and to bid for

RIV No.	Qty.	Item/Description	Approved Budget
L-05-009	1 Lot	VARIOUS YAKAL WOODEN SLEEPERS	Php 2,112,325.00

Bid documents can be obtained from the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) Secretariat at the Ground Floor, Administration Building, LRTA Compound, Aurora Blvd., Pasay City, during regular office hours starting **April 14-April 25, 2005** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **One Thousand Pesos (Php 1,000.00)**.

For the purpose of clarifying issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **April 26, 2005**, Tuesday, 9:00 A.M. at the above address.

The BAC Secretariat shall receive sealed bids not later than **May 12, 2005, Thursday** at **9:00 A.M.** and shall then be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

Bids shall not be considered without the presence of the supplier/bidder or its authorized representative.

LRTA reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, without assuming any obligation whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of its bids, and will entertain only such bid/s established to be the most advantageous to the Government.

(Sgd.) LT COL CESAR B. CHAVEZ (GSC) MNSA
Deputy Administrator
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - April 14, 2005)

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JAVIER, Rufino S.B.,	**Commissioner**
SADAIN, Mehol K.,	**Commissioner**
BORRA, Resurreccion Z.,	**Commissioner**
TUASON, Jr., Florentino A.,	**Commissioner**
GARCILLANO, Virgilio O.,	**Commissioner**
BARCELONA, Jr., Manuel A.,	**Commissioner**

Promulgated: 12 April 2005

RESOLUTION NO. 7468

WHEREAS, the House of Representatives approved and passed Resolution No. 37 dated March 02, 2005, certifying to the existence of a vacancy in the House of Representatives particularly in the 5th District of Cebu and calling for a special election to fill said vacancy;

WHEREAS, the Commission on Elections (Commission), accordingly acted on the abovementioned resolution and set the special election on May 30, 2005;

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the powers vested in it by the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, the Omnibus Election Code, Republic Act No. 7166 and other election laws, the Commission **RESOLVED** to prescribe, as it hereby prescribes, the following calendar of activities and periods or certain prohibited acts in connection with the said special election.

DATE/PERIOD	ACTIVITIES	PROHIBITED ACTS
(ELECTION PERIOD) April 20, 2005 (WED) to June 09, 2005 (THURS)		Bearing, carrying or transporting of firearms/deadly weapons, (Sec. 32, RA 7166) Transfer or detail of officers and employees in the civil service, including public school teachers (Sec. 261 (h) OEC) Organizing or maintaining reaction/strike forces or similar forces (Sec. 261 (u), OEC) Use of security personnel or bodyguards by candidates whether or not such bodyguards are regular members or officers of the Philippine National Police or the Armed Forces of the Philippines or other government law enforcement agency. (Sec. 33, R.A. No. 7166) Suspension of any elective provincial, city, municipal or barangay officer. (Sec. 261 (x). OEC Illegal release of prisoners before and after election (Sec. 261 (n), OEC
April 20, 2005 (WED) to May 30, 2005 (MON)		Raising of funds for an election campaign thru dances, lotteries, cockfights, etc. (Sec. 97, OEC)
April 22, 2005 (FRI) to April 28, 2005 (THURS)	Filing of certificates of candidacy	
(CAMPAIGN PERIOD) April 29, 2005 (FRI) to May 28, 2005 (SAT)	Campaigning	Posting, displaying distributing and using illegal campaign materials. (Sec. 85, OEC) Removing, destroying, obliterating, defacing, tampering or preventing distribution of lawful election propaganda (Sec. 83, OEC)
April 29, 2005 (FRI) to May 30, 2005 (MON)		Wearing of uniforms and bearing arms by any member of security or police organization outside the immediate vicinity of his place of work (Sec. 261 (s), OEC)
April 30, 2005 (SAT) to May 29, 2005 (SUN)		Appointment or hiring of new employees (Sec. 261 (g) (1), OEC) Creation or filling of new positions (Sec. 261 (g), (I), OEC) Promotion or giving salary increases or remuneration or privilege (Sec. 261 (g) (2), OEC) Releases, disbursements or expenditures of public funds for public works and social services and development (Sec. 261 (v), OEC) Construction of public works, delivery of materials for public works and issuance of treasury warrants and similar devices (Sec. 261 (w), OEC)
April 30, 2005 (SUN) to May 30, 2005 (MON)		Use of armored/ land/ water/ air craft (Sec. 261 (r), OEC) Appointment or use of special policemen, special/confidential agents or the like (Sec. 261 (m), OEC)
May 16, 2005 (MON)	Last day to appoint members of the Board of Election Inspectors. Issuance of notices of inspection and verification of the VRRs and sealing of the book of voters.	
May 18, 2005 (WED) to May 20, 2005 (FRI)	Inspection and verification of completeness of the Voters Registration Record and sealing of the Book of Voters	
May 23, 2005 (MON) to May 30, 2005 (MON)	Posting of the list of voters.	
May 29, 2005 (SUN) to May 30, 2005 (MON)		Campaigning (Sec. 3, OEC) Selling, furnishing, offering, buying, serving or taking intoxicating liquor, etc. (Sec. 261 (dd), (1), OEC) Giving, accepting free transportation, food, drinks and things of value (Sec. 89, OEC)
ELECTION DAY May 30, 2005 (MON)	Casting of Votes (from 7:00 o'clock a.m. to 3:00 o'clock p.m.) Convening of the City, Municipal and Provincial District Board of Canvassers (6:00 o'clock p.m.)	Opening of booths or stalls for the sale, etc., of wares, merchandise or refreshments, within thirty (30) meters radius from the polling place. (Sec. 261, (dd) (2), OEC) Holding of fairs, cockfights, boxing, horse races or similar sports. (Sec. 261, (dd) (3), OEC)
May 31, 2005 (TUE) to June 29, 2005 (WED)	Filing of Statements of Contributions and Expenditures.	

The Education and Information Department shall cause the publication of this Resolution in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines, and give the same widest dissemination.

The Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Director for Operations shall immediately implement this Resolution.

This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS
Chairman

RUFINO S.B. JAVIER
Commissioner

MEHOL K. SADAIN
Commissioner

RESURRECCION Z. BORRA
Commissioner

FLORENTINO A. TUASON, Jr.
Commissioner

VIRGILIO O. GARCILLANO
Commissioner

MANUEL A. BARCELONA, Jr.
Commissioner

Republic of the Philippines

COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS

Manila

IN THE MATTER OF CALLING FOR THE CONDUCT OF SPECIAL ELECTIONS TO FILL THE VACANCY IN THE POSITION OF MEMBER, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FIFTH DISTRICT OF THE PROVINCE OF CEBU ON MAY 30, 2005.

x - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - x

Chairman	Benjamin S. **ABALOS**
Commissioner	Rufino S.B. **JAVIER**
Commissioner	Merol K. **SADAIN**
Commissioner	Resurreccion Z. **BORRA**
Commissioner	Florentino A. **TUASON, Jr.**
Commissioner	Virgilio O. **GARCILLANO**
Commissioner	Manuel A. **BARCELONA, Jr.**

Promulgated: 12 April 2005

RESOLUTION NO. 7467

WHEREAS, the Honorable Joseph Ace Durano, Representative of the 5th District of Cebu assumed office as Office of Secretary of Tourism on November 30, 2004;

WHEREAS, on March 2, 2005, the House of Representatives adopted Resolution No. 37 certifying to the existence of a vacancy in the House of Representatives particularly in the Fifth District of the Province of Cebu;

WHEREAS, Paragraph 2 of Section 4 of Republic Act No. 7166 entitled: "An Act Providing for Synchronized National and Local Elections and for Electoral Reforms, authorizing appropriations therefor, and for other purposes provides that:

> *"In case a permanent vacancy shall occur in the Senate or House of Representatives at least one (1) year before the expiration of the term, the Commission shall call and hold a special election to fill the vacancy not earlier than sixty (60) days nor longer that ninety (90) days after the occurrence of the vacancy. However, in case of such vacancy in the Senate, the special election shall be held simultaneously with the next succeeding regular election."*

WHEREAS, more than one (1) year still remains before the expiration of the term of the office vacated by the Honorable Joseph Ace Durano and thus comes within the ambit of Paragraph 2 of Section 4 of Republic Act No. 7166;

WHEREFORE, the Commission on Elections, pursuant to Paragraph 2 of Section 4 of Republic Act No. 7166 hereby **RESOLVE** as it hereby **RESOLVES** to call for the holding of a special election to fill the vacancy in the House of Representatives particularly in the fifth district of the Province Cebu on May 30, 2005.

The Education and Information Department shall cause the publication of this Resolution in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines, and give the same widest dissemination.

The Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Director for Operations shall immediately implement this Resolution.

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS
Chairman

RUFINO S. B. JAVIER
Commissioner

MEHOL K. SADAIN
Commissioner

RESURRECCION Z. BORRA
Commissioner

FLORENTINO A. TUASON, JR.
Commissioner

VIRGILIO O. GARCILLANO
Commissioner

MANUEL A. BARCELONA, JR.
Commissioner

(PDI–April 14, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

2/F Building 1, San Lazaro Compound, Rizal Avenue, Sta. Cruz, 1003 Manila
Trunk Line 743-83-01 Direct Line: 711-9501; Fax: 743-1829;743-1829; 743-1786
URL: http://www.doh.gov.ph; e-mail: osec@doh.gov.ph

31 March 2005

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER
NO. 2005-0007

SUBJECT : Amending Administrative Order No. 142, s. 2004 by providing exemption from the requirement of Certificate of Product Registration for all goods procured through UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, and GDF

I. RATIONALE

Administrative Order No. 142, series of 2004 *re: Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD)'s Issuance of Certificate of Product Registration Foreign Assisted Projects Procurement and Laboratory Testing of Pharmaceutical and Biological Products Procured by and/or delivered to the Department of Health (DOH)*, was issued, among other things, to facilitate the issuance of Certificates of Product Registration (CPR) for the procurement of pharmaceutical and biological products and invasive medical devices of foreign assisted projects (FAPs).

Given however the urgency and indispensability of the pharmaceutical and biological products and invasive medical devices of FAPs for various preventive and curative health programs and services of the government, there is a need to examine and re-evaluate the present system in the light of the efficiency of the procurement system of international organizations and other internationally-recognized institutions, namely, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Health Organization (WHO), and Global Drug Fund (GDF), and given the strict quality assurance procedures to which commodities procured by both organizations are subjected to.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Order is to establish the exemption from the requirement of the CPR all pharmaceutical and biological products and invasive medical devices procured through the UNICEF, UNDP, WHO and GDF.

In providing for such exemption, this Department, through BFAD, does not in any way abandon, but hereby reiterates and consistently adopts, its mandate and responsibility to ensure the safety, efficacy and good quality of products applied for registration.

III. SCOPE AND COVERAGE

Section III, part A of Administrative Order No. 142, s. 2004 provides:

"III. Guidelines

A. Issuance of CPR for pharmaceutical products being procured under competitive international bidding and funded by foreign assisted projects.

1. Foreign bidders belonging to member countries of international funding agencies of DOH projects may be allowed to participate in a DOH bidding even without a CPR; however, no award or contract shall be made unless and until the appropriate CPR is issued by BFAD.
2. The foreign bidder without a CPR shall already submit the document requirements for application of CPR at the time it makes its bid. After bid opening, when the bidder would appear to be the lowest but not yet complying, the bidder will have to make the application for CPR to BFAD within ten (10) days including submission of sample in commercial presentation.
3. Within ten (10) days from submission of said application, the BFAD should process the same subject to the pertinent provisions of various BFAD Circulars and requirements for registration of pharmaceutical products."

The aforecited provision is hereby amended to read as follows:

"III. Guidelines

A. Issuance of CPR for pharmaceutical products being procured under competitive international bidding and funded by foreign assisted projects except those procured through the UNICEF and WHO.

1. As a general rule, all foreign bidders belonging to member countries of international funding agencies of DOH projects may be allowed to participate in a DOH bidding even without a CPR; however, no award or contract shall be made unless and until the appropriate CPR is issued by BFAD.

(a) The foreign bidder without a CPR shall already submit the document requirements for application of CPR at the time it makes its bid. After bid opening, when the bidder would appear to be the lowest but not yet complying, the bidder will have to make the application for CPR to BFAD within ten (10) days including submission of sample in commercial presentation.

(b) Within ten (10) days from submission of said application, the BFAD should process the same subject to the pertinent provisions of various BFAD Circulars and requirements for registration of pharmaceutical products.

2. However, when the procurement is made through the UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, and GDF, no CPR shall be required."

IV. REPEALING CLAUSE

Section III (A) of Administrative Order No. 142, s. 2004 is accordingly amended while Section III, (B) (3) and (B) (5) thereof are hereby repealed. All other administrative issuances, bureau circulars, and memoranda inconsistent with this Order are hereby withdrawn, repealed and/or revoked accordingly.

V. EFFECTIVITY

This Order shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

MANUEL M. DAYRIT, M.D., M.Sc.
Secretary of Health

(PDI–April 14, 2005)

PNOC EXPLORATION CORPORATION

PNOC
The Energy Company

PNOC Bldg. I, Energy Center, Merritt Road,
Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Telephone Nos.: 893-6001 to 47 local 2101-2104
Direct Line: 840-2024/Fax No.: (632) 840-1459

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC Exploration Corporation (PNOC-EC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and submit sealed bids for the **STEVEDORING, ARRASTRE AND HAULING SERVICES FOR THE UNLOADING AND LOADING OF COAL AND OTHER BULK CARGO AT BATANGAS COAL TERMINAL (BT04-1261)**. The contract duration is One (1) Year.

The approved budget for this contract is Php 20,637,500.00 chargeable against PNOC EC funds.

Eligibility and Bid Documents shall be available for issuance at the above address from the Contracts Assistant (c/o Mr. George N. Alejandro/Mr. Carlos L. Mejias) starting **April 15, 2005** upon payment of non-refundable fee of PESOS: One Thousand Five Hundred (PHP 1,500.00).

Eligibility of prospective bidders to participate will be based on compliance to eligibility requirements, using pass/fail non-discretionary criteria, as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations-A (IRR-A) of RA 9184. The Government Procurement Reform Act. Only those Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check shall be opened and to be awarded to the Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Responsive bid, provided that the concerned Bidder shall pass the post-qualification process.

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **May 2, 2005, 2:00 P.M.** at the PNOC EC Batangas Coal Terminal, Bauan, Batangas.

The Eligibility Requirements and the Bid Documents, composed of two (2) sealed envelope, the first envelope containing the Technical Bid and the second envelope containing the Financial Bid shall be submitted in two (2) sets each to the Bids and Awards Committee not later than **3:00 P.M. of May 17, 2005** at the PNOC EC Conference Room located at the above address and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter. Late bids shall not be accepted.

PNOC EC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any formality therein, or to accept such bids or to award any part thereof to any bidder/s whose bid/s is/are considered most advantageous to PNOC EC.

This publication is also posted in our website at www.pnoc-ec.com.ph and in the DBM website at www.procurementservice.net.

(Sgd.) Ernesto S. San Jose
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - April 14, 2005)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY

Quezon City

April 7, 2005

TO : ALL INSURANCE COMPANIES:

The National Food Authority is still accepting applications for insurance accreditation for the year 2005. Only companies having both insurance and bond services can apply. Accredited companies would serve the insurance bond requirements for our private grains businessmen involved in milling and warehousing activities.

Please secure an application form from the Business Regulations Department (BRD) 3/F Matimyas Bldg., 101 F. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue, Quezon City.

For further inquiries, please call Tel. Nos. 712-1401 or 712-33-41 to 45 local 6315 during office hours and look for Ms. Yolanda C. Nieves or Fe Sol A. Villamora.

THE NFA BUSINESS REGULATIONS DEPARTMENT

(PDI–April 14, 2005)

US Fed mulls over aggressive approach to interest hikes

WASHINGTON—Federal Reserve policymakers, concerned about inflation picking up, debated at last month's meeting whether they needed to signal the possibility of a more aggressive campaign to raise interest rates, according to minutes of the Fed's March meeting released Tuesday.

Specifically, policy-makers discussed whether they should at some point abandon their stance of gradually raising short-term interest rates. In the end, however, they decided to stay with that approach, for now.

Fed Chair Alan Greenspan and his colleagues at the March 22 meeting boosted short-term interest rates by one-quarter percentage point, the seventh increase of that size since the Fed began its credit tightening campaign last June.

Even though the Fed took a much more hawkish tone about the possibility of an inflation flare-up, it still stuck with language in its post-meeting statement that future rate increases could be at a pace "that is likely to be measured." Economists have come to view the term "measured" as one-quarter percentage point increases.

Policy-makers, at the March meeting, discussed the pros and cons of maintaining this stance.

"Some expressed the view that such language could constrain future policy inappropriately," the Fed minutes said. "While these concerns were not new, they were now felt to be more pressing, as the odds that the committee might need to step up the pace of policy firming were thought to have increased."

Most members, however, believed the "measured" language was clearly conditional on how the economy and inflation unfolded.

Thus, they believed the wording didn't rule out either speeding up the Fed's rate-raising campaign or taking a pause, if economic conditions warranted.

Asia oil prices fall; stocks edge higher

TRILATERAL COOPERATION

A MAN relaxes in front of giant billboards advertising Japanese and Korean consumer giants in Beijing. Senior officials from Japan, China and South Korea are in Beijing to enhance trilateral and regional cooperation in East Asia amid simmering rows between Tokyo and its East Asian neighbors. AFP

SINGAPORE—Oil prices fell in Asian trade Wednesday after the International Energy Agency (IEA) pointed to slower demand growth in China and as the market looked ahead to an expected rise in US crude inventories, dealers said.

Also, Asian share markets yesterday edged higher, while the dollar drifted lower after a record US trade deficit and benign Fed meeting minutes.

At 11.45 a.m. (0345 GMT), New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in May, was down 49 cents to $51.37 a barrel from $51.86 in New York.

The contract fell $1.46 in New York Tuesday after the IEA revised down its estimate for world demand for oil this year by 50,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 84.3 million bpd.

The IEA estimated that oil demand growth in China had slowed to 5.4 percent in the first two months of 2005, "well below the 20.8 percent growth seen a year ago."

Fears of a surge in second-quarter Chinese demand were receding, it added.

The IEA said other factors likely to ease tensions in the oil market included interest rate rises, the arrival of the northern hemisphere spring, increased production by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and growing stockpiles.

An expected supply crunch drove oil prices to record highs last week, with the New York contract hitting a peak of $58.28 on April 4.

Meanwhile, Japan's Nikkei average inched higher in morning trade to 11,672.79, led by issues such as Canon Inc. that have dropped recently, but retailers sank for a third session.

US stocks rallied sharply after the release of the Fed minutes, which fired up investor appetite for banks, such as Citigroup Inc.

The Dow Jones industrial average rose 0.57 percent to 10,507.97. The Nasdaq Composite Index gained 0.67 percent to finish the day at 2,005.40.

MSCI's index of non-Japan Asian shares gained 0.3 percent.

Most markets were near opening levels by late morning. Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index was the biggest gainer, rising about a quarter of a percent.

The US trade deficit hit $61.04 billion in February, above $60 billion for the first time and well above forecasts of a $59 billion gap. But traders and analysts said the currency market had already been braced for a high number.

"The dollar had moved down ahead of the trade figures, so that tells me the market had discounted the bad numbers," said Marshall Gittler, senior market strategist at Deutsche Securities in Tokyo.

US Treasury debt prices swung higher, sending benchmark yields to a one-month low, reflecting relief in the bond market that the Fed intended to stick with gradual rate increases. *AFP, Reuters*

Nike admits some of its overseas factories harass workers

BEAVERTON, Oregon—After years of criticism over its labor practices abroad, Nike Inc. has disclosed for the first time the names and locations of more than 700 factories that produce its sneakers, apparel and other products.

Industry experts say the disclosure, part of the company's corporate responsibility report, makes the sneaker giant the first major apparel manufacturer to voluntarily disclose its entire supply chain.

In the report released yesterday, Nike also acknowledges that factories with which it has contracts to produce goods have harassed workers and forced some to work overtime.

For years, activists have demanded that Nike and other major companies reveal where their factories are located, so that independent observers could go and assess the labor conditions.

Corporations have been reluctant to do so, arguing that the plants are where the company's trade secrets are laid bare and that advanced products could be leaked to rivals.

In its 108-page corporate responsibility report, Nike discloses the names of 124 plants in China contracted to make its products, 73 in Thailand, 35 in South Korea, 34 in Vietnam—with others elsewhere in Asia, as well as in South America, Australia, Canada, Italy, Mexico, Turkey and the United States.

While the competitive risk still exists, Nike spokesperson Lee Weinstein said, "that's something we're willing to take on if this disclosure will in fact move the industry forward in addressing some of these endemic issues." AP

Former AIG chief gave wife $2.2B in shares

NEW YORK—Three days before he resigned as head of American International Group Inc., Maurice "Hank" Greenberg gave his wife 41.4 million of his shares in the insurance company, according to a regulatory filing.

The disclosure came on Tuesday, the same day Greenberg declined to answer questions posed by government investigators probing transactions at AIG.

AIG's board forced Greenberg, 79, to relinquish his posts as president and CEO on March 14. He retired as the company's chairman two weeks later.

Greenberg transferred the shares to his wife, Corinne P. Greenberg, on March 11, according to his filing Tuesday with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The shares are worth $2.2 billion (euro1.69 billion), based on AIG's current stock price.

Greenberg directly held 1.95 million shares after the transfer. In the filing, Greenberg also disclaimed ownership "and any pecuniary interest" in another 23.65 million AIG shares he held through C.V. Starr & Co. Inc., which controls AIG managers' compensation.

Howard Opinsky, a spokesperson for Greenberg's legal team, declined to comment on the filing, as did AIG spokesperson Chris Winans.

At Tuesday's deposition, Greenberg invoked his Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination in response to all questions during the 45 minute session, according to a person who attended the meeting.

Greenberg's substantial stock gift to his wife is sure to spark investigators' interest, because it appears to be an effort to shield assets, said Thomas Ajamie, a securities lawyer in Houston.

Investigators are looking into a number of reinsurance transactions booked by New York-based AIG, one of the world's largest insurers. Reinsurance traditionally has been used to spread out risk among insurers but, in some cases, it has also been used for the questionable purpose of polishing a company's financial statements. *AP*

5% ceiling on VAT . . .

From page B1

Teves noted that in 2004, the estimated zero-VAT-rated and VAT-exempted sales amounted to P1.17 trillion, or 28.96 percent of total sales declared by companies last year. This resulted in the VAT collection equivalent to only 2.54 percent as against the 10-percent VAT rate.

The amounts representing exempt as well as zero-rated sales are alarmingly huge and this should merit audit by the BIR (Bureau of Internal Revenue) in order to see whether such declared sales are indeed valid," Teves said in his speech.

Actual budget gap . . .

From page B1

previously announced P884.4 billion. The 2004 expenditure breached the target of P874 billion.

The DOF earlier said that the lower-than-programmed deficit last year already placed the government's fiscal consolidation plan a year ahead of schedule, or 2009 instead of 2010.

It added that should Congress pass this year the remaining revenue-raising measures of the Arroyo administration, particularly the changes in the value-added tax system, the goal of balancing the budget would be attained at an even earlier date of 2008.

The VAT reform plan, which seeks to increase the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent and lift exemptions of several products and services, is estimated to generate about P60 billion in additional revenue a year for the government.

Republic of the Philippines
SUPREME COURT
Manila

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Supreme Court invites interested canteen concessionaire to submit quotations/proposals for the operation of Canteen located at the Multi-Purpose Building, Supreme Court Compound, Padre Faura Street, Manila that will provide canteen services to 2,500 employees more or less.

Interested concessionaires may secure eligibility requirements and bid documents from the Secretariat, Committee on Bids, Property Division, Supreme Court, after payment of a non-refundable fee of One Thousand (P1,000.00) pesos. For additional information, contact the Secretary, Atty. Ennar Cabanilla at Telefax 5251270 or Norma Josue at Telefax 5266401.

Interested bidders must not be related to the head of the procuring entity or any member of the Committee on Bids or COB Secretariat either by consanguinity or affinity up to the third civil degree.

I. PRE-BID CONFERENCE

The pre-bid conference shall be on **27 April 2005**, 2:00 p.m. at the Old Session Hall, 3rd floor, Old Building, Supreme Court, Padre Faura St., Manila.

II. SUBMISSION OF ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The legal requirements for eligibility of prospective bidders must be personally submitted by the duly authorized representative on **4 May 2005**, 2:00 p.m. at the Old Session Hall, 3rd Floor, Old Building, Supreme Court.

III. OPENING OF BIDS

Bids of eligible bidders will be accepted and opened in the presence of the bidders or their representative on **11 May 2005**, at 10:00 a.m. at Old Session Hall, 3rd Floor, Old Building, Supreme Court.

The Committee on Bids reserves the right to reject any or all quotations and/or offers submitted, waives any defects or informalities therein, or accepts any quotation or offer which it may consider to be advantageous and beneficial to the government.

JOSE P. PEREZ
Chairman

13 April 2005.

By:

(Sgd.) **FELIPA B. ANAMA**
Vice-Chairperson
Committee on Bids

(PDI–April 14 & 20, 2005)

8 KEYS TO YOUR DIFFERENT INTERESTS

SATURDAY
STYLE
Do you celebrate Valen
INQUIRER Badminton Monthly
ELAN
A change of heart
INQUIRER Golf Monthly
Oldies but Goodies
INQUIRER
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Few are called.
Even fewer will be chosen.
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Autohaus BMW Dealer Qualifying Tournament
April 22, 2005
Wack-Wack Golf & Country Club

The tee-off for the BMW Golf Cup International 2005 will begin at Autohaus BMW. Winners will advance to the National Finals, where the winners shall move on to be the country's representatives to the World Final at the Blue Canyon Country Club in Phuket, Thailand.

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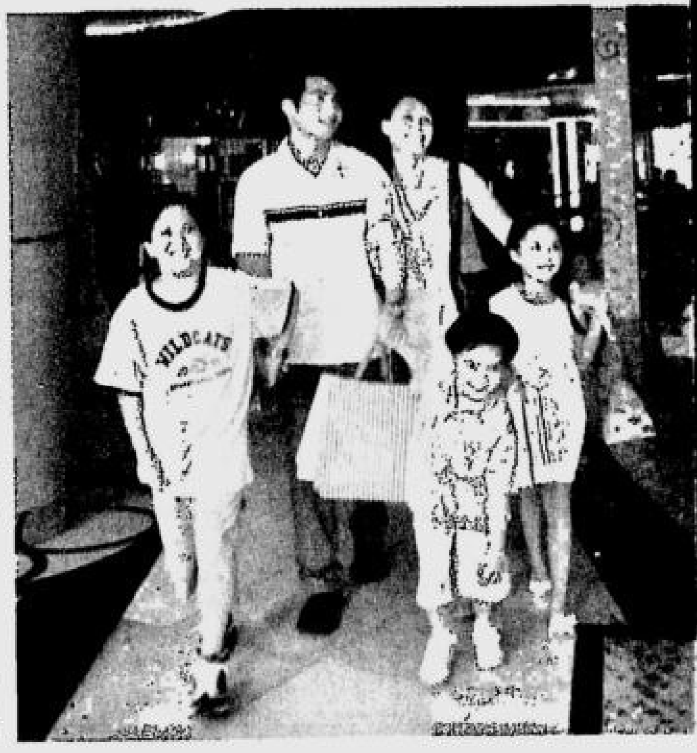

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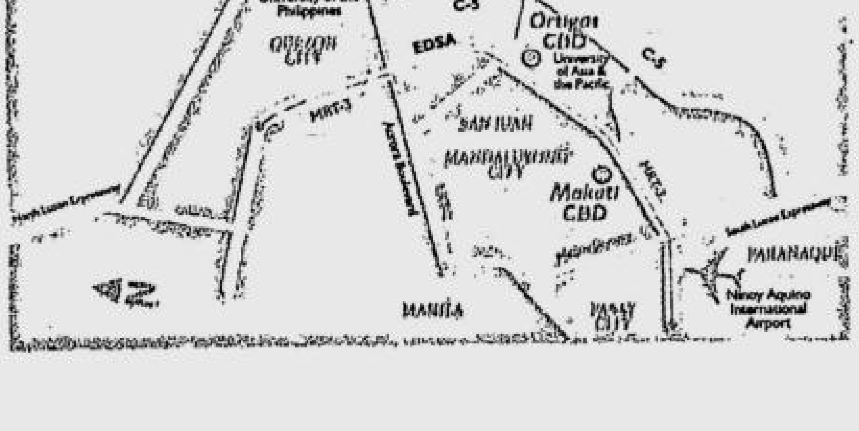
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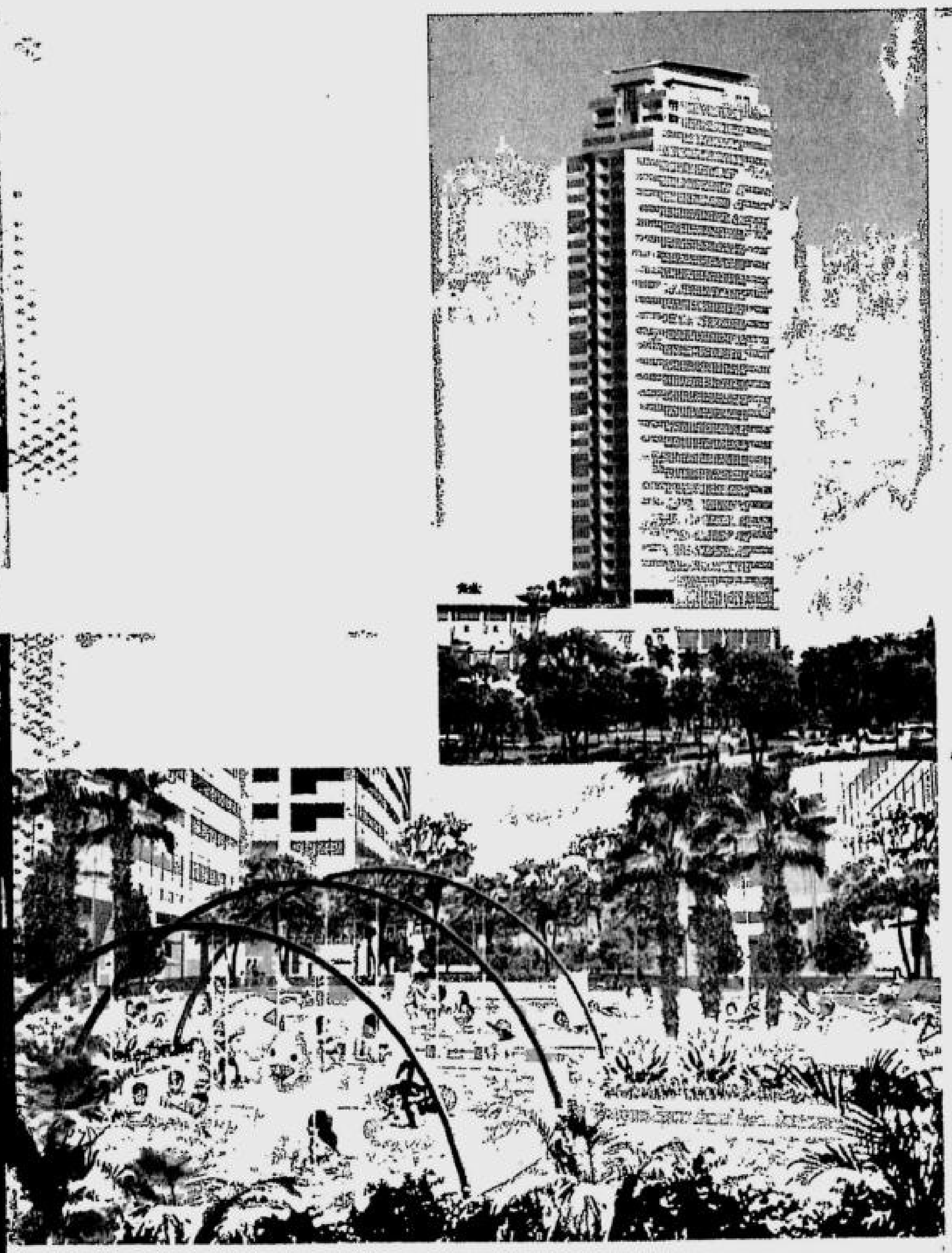

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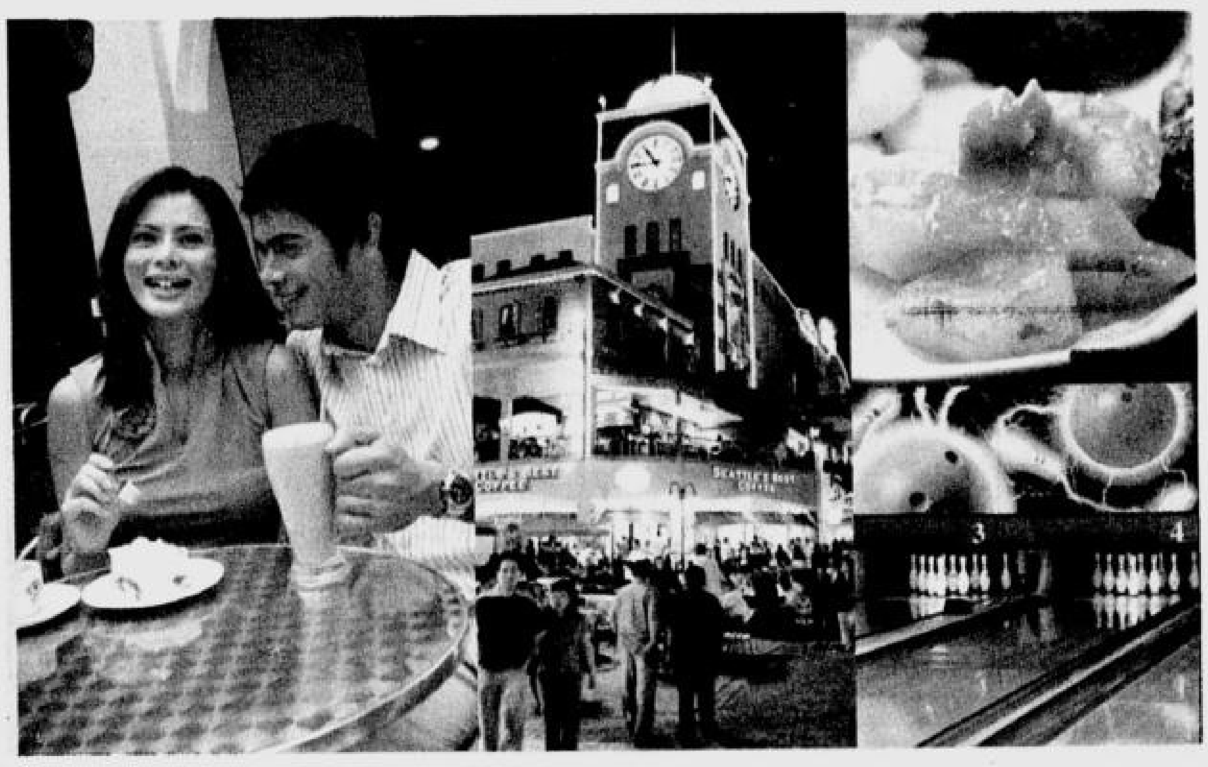

Make a whole City your home.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estates of the late ANDREA SAN CARLOS FABELLA, LEONISA F. ZALAMEA-ASERON and NATIVIDAD F. ZALAMEA-MAGALLONA were settled by their heirs through an extrajudicial settlement acknowledged before Not. Pub. Atty. Rhea L. Bunoan of Q.C. under Doc. 285; Page 57, Bk XIII Series of 2005. (PDI 4 /7, 14, & 21 '05)

NOTICE is hereby given that the estate of the late EMMANUEL S. ATILANO was extrajudicially settled by the heirs on April 12, 2005 as per Doc. No. 270, Page 55, Book 41-4, Series of 2005 before Notary Public Atty. Lope M. Velasco of Pasig City.
(PDI - April 14, 21 and 28, 2005)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late Benedicto G. Miran, Sr. was extrajudicially settled by the heirs on March 8, 2005 as per Doc. No. 446, Page No. 91, Book 1 Series of 2005 before Notary Public Atty. Nenita A. Dantes of Quezon City.
PDI-Mach 31,April7&14, 2005

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late TERESA M. ANDRADE has been extrajudicially settled between her heirs as per Doc. No. 162; Page 34; Book No. XX11; Series of 2004 before Atty. Esperanza C. Doroja, Notary Public of Manila.
PDI-April 14,21 & 28,2005

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills
City of Mandaluyong, Metro Manila

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Securities and Exchange Commission, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites qualified local bidders/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the REPAIR AND RENOVATION OF SEC CEBU EXTENSION OFFICE at SEC Bldg., V. Rama Ave., English, Guadalupe, Cebu City.

a. Duly licensed Filipino citizens/sole proprietorship or
b. Partnership duly organized under the laws of the Philippines and of which at least seventy five percent (75%) of the interest belongs to citizen of the Philippines; or
c. Corporation duly organized under the laws of the Philippines, and of which at least seventy five percent (75%) of the outstanding capital stock belongs to citizen of the Philippines; or
d. Cooperatives duly registered with the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) and

Bidders/contractors should have a valid and current License and Registration issued by PCAB.

License : at least "Category C"
Registration : at least "SMALL B"

Bidder should have a similar completed contract within a period of **five (5) years** and must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the approved budget of the contract to be bid.

The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to be bid is FOUR MILLION FORTY SEVEN THOUSAND THIRTY THREE PESOS AND FORTY FIVE CENTAVOS (Php4,047,033.45).

Documents for Application for Eligibility will be available for issuance starting **April 8 to 15, 2005** at the General Services Division, 4th Floor, SEC Building, EDSA Greenhills, Mandaluyong City, upon presentation of PCAB license and a payment of a non-refundable fee of Five Hundred Pesos **(P500.00)**.

Deadline for submission of Letter of Intent and opening of the Eligibility Envelope shall be on **April 22, 2005, 10:00 a.m.** at the Market Regulation Department (MRD) Conference Room, 6th Floor, SEC Building.

A complete set of bidding documents may be obtained by the eligible bidder starting **April 25 to May 2, 2005** at the General Services Division, 4th Floor, SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills, Mandaluyong City, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Two Thousand Five Hundred Pesos **(P2,500.00)**. For further details, please contact Asst. Director Romeo O. Dauag at Tel. No. 727-3320.

Pre-Bid conference will be on **May 2, 2005, 10:00 a.m.** at the Market Regulation Department (MRD) Conference Room, 6th Floor, SEC Building.

Deadline for submission and opening of Technical and Price Proposal will be on **May 16, 2005, 10:00 a.m.** at the Market Regulation Department (MRD) Conference Room, 6th Floor, SEC Building. Late submission and/or incomplete bid documents will no longer be accepted.

Republic Act 9184, and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) shall govern all particulars relative to Eligibility, Bid Bond, Pre-Bid Conference, Bid Evaluation, Post Qualification and Awards of Contracts.

The SEC reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any required formalities therein and to award the contract to the bidder whose proposal as evaluated is most advantageous to the Commission.

SEC also assumes no obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidder for any expense or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of the bids, nor does it guarantee that any award will be made.

(Sgd.) JOSÉ AQUINO
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI–April 7 & 14, 2005)

PUBLIC NOTICES

AUCTION SALE

MUNOZ-FILIPINAS PAWNSHOP,Roosevelt Ave., Katipunan, Diliman, Quezon City. All unredeemed pledges of NOV. 2004 will be auctioned on APRIL 25, 2005, 2:00 PM. - Lanuza & Sons - Auctioneer.
(PDI - APRIL 14, 2005)

MEYCAUAYAN-FILIPINAS PAWNSHOP,Alw Complex, Calvario, Meyc, Bulacan. All unredeemed pledges of Oct. 2004 will be auctioned on April 25, 8:30 a.m. LANUZA & SONS-AUCTIONEER.
(PDI-APRIL 14, 2005)

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BOARD OF INVESTMENTS
dti TRADE & INDUSTRY

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the application of SYDNEY INTERIORS PTY. LTD. INC. with office address at Estrella, Rizal, Nueva Ecija for registration with the Board of Investments under Book I of the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987, otherwise known as E.O. 226, as Amended, as a New Export Producer of Made-up Articles of Textiles such as but not limited to Bedspreads, Bedsheets, Pillow Cases, Curtains, Table Covers with a capacity of 49,009 pieces per year with project site at same office address stated above has been officially accepted on April 13, 2005 and is currently being processed.

Any person with valid objections to or pertinent comments on the above-mentioned application may file his/ her objection, in writing under oath, with the BOI within one (1) week from the date of this publication.

Issued this 13th day of April 2005.

(Sgd.) RUDY B. CAÑA
Officer-in-Charge
Project Evaluation and Registration Department

(PDI – April 14, 2005)

NOTICE OF APPLICATION

The MULTI-DIMENSION MGT. & CONSULTING PARTNERS, CO. (MDMCPartners) located at Suite 18 SJRDC Building, Insular Village Commercial Center, Lanang, Davao City with S.E.C. Reg. No. D200200372 and Dept. of Labor & Employment (DOLE) Reg No. 85905-1002-053, has filed an application with Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) to upgrade its existing business of outsourcing for a license to recruitment overseas workers. The following represents the company:

1. Marciano D. Maglibay, CPA – General Partner, Managing Director
2. Virginsita D. Magtibay – General Partner, Finance & Administration
3. Sheryl M. Linao – Industrial Partner, Administration
4. Maricris P. Escamillas – Industrial Partner, System & Control
5. Lani F.D. Maglibay – Recruitment, Training & Development

(PDI–April 14, 2005)

RA Form No. 10.1 (LCRO)
Republic of the Philippines
Local Civil Registry Office
Province: Abra
City/Municipality: Lagayan

NOTICE OF PUBLICATION

In compliance with Section 5 of R.A. Act No. 9048, a notice is hereby served to the public that VICTOR ROLAND TAMAYO has filed with this Office a petition for changed of first name from MARIA JIMEMAH to MA. JIMEMA in the birth certificate of MARIA JIMEMAH who was born on January 22, 1970 at Lagayan, Abra and whose parents are Esteban Tamayo and Dania Dalangay.

Any person adversely affected by said petition may file his written opposition with this Office no later than March 22, 2005.

(Sgd.) CARMELO T. VELASQUEZ
City/Municipal Civil Registrar

(PDI – April 14 & 21, 2005)

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24-HR
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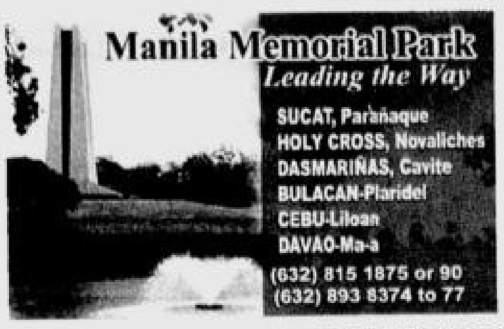
722-1155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OBITUARIES

SALIM RAVAL AYACHE

Joined his Creator
on April 12, 2005 at the age of 77.

His wife **Norma**,
and children **Ida, Nena, May, Ritt,**
William, Rudy, Irene and **Patricia**
request you to join them
in sending him off with love
and prayers.

His body lies in state
at Funeraria Nacional,
Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

"...I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die..." John 11:25-26

The Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program
extends sincere condolences to the bereaved family of our colleague

Ma. Pepa Pedroza Dumon

She peacefully joined our Lord on April 10, 2005.

*Her relatives and friends request you to pray for the eternal repose of her soul. **Pepa** will be fondly remembered as a cheerful, smart, brave, hardworking and beautiful lady. Her work and contibution made a lot of difference in the pursuant of peace and development in Mindanao.*

Her remains lie in state at the Rolling Hills Funeral Parlor in downtown Cebu until April 14 and will be brought to her family residence in Barangay Fatima, Daang Bantayan, Cebu on April 15, 2005.

Interment will be on April 23, 2005
in Daang Bantayan, Cebu.

Ma. Teresa B. Prieto

Passed away in the grace of our Lord on April 10, 2005
at the age of 53 at Torrance, California, U.S.A.

Her bereaved children **Chris** and **Alex**; parents **Simeon Sr.** (†) and **Josie**; her brothers and sisters, **Marilou P. Seminiano, Simeon B. Prieto, Jr., Cathy P. Sendin, Cora P. Payabyab, Christy P. Chan, Joselito B. Prieto**; her brothers and sisters-in-law, nephew, nieces and spouses and relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Holy Mass will be celebrated at 9:00 A.M. on April 13, 2005 at Nativity Catholic Church, Torrance, California and her remains will be cremated at 2:00 P.M. at McKenzie Cremation and Burial Services. The cremains will arrive in and will lie in state at St. Rafael Church Mortuary, Legazpi City, Albay on April 22, 2005.

Interment will be on April 23, 2005 at Bicol Memorial Park, Bonot, Legazpi City after a 9:00 A.M. Mass at St. Rafael Church mortuary.

I am
the way,
the truth
and
the life.
No one
comes
to the
Father
except
through
Me.
John 14:6

What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
of splendor in the grass, or glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find,
strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death;
In years that bring the philosophic mind
— Wordsworth

In loving remembrance of the
First Death Anniversary of

SANTIAGO C. DIVINAGRACIA

(14 April 1931-14 April 2004)
Ilo-ilo City
Ateneo de Manila Law Class 1955

Masses will be offered on Thursday, April 14, 2005
at the following churches and chapels:

Christ the King Memorial Park, *Jaro Iloilo City*	4:30 PM
San Jose Church, *Iloilo City*	7:00 AM
Sta. Ma. Church, *Iloilo City*	5:30 PM
St. Therese Church, Lahug, *Cebu City*	12:00 noon
AIM Chapel, *Makati*	12:30 PM
Sanctuario de San Antonio, *Makati*	6:00 PM
St. John Bosco Church, *Makati*	6:00 PM
Makati Medical Center Chapel	4:00 PM

His loving wife, **Ellen** and children **Elsa, Ruth, Marie, Llane Grace, Ricardo** and **Emily**, grandchildren **Claudito, Isabel** and **Alfonso** request those whose lives he touched, and the reader, to pray for his eternal happiness.

Opening of people's cemetery

DUE to the mounting pressure from Manila residents the Manila North Green Park a modern low-cost cemetery, has decided to advance the date for accepting interment to April 15 on a limited scale. The cemetery is an extension of the Manila North Cemetery and consists of multi-level bone and coffin crypts which are patterned after the innovative and modern technology developed in Canada and the United States.

Interment costs is definitely affordable and when fully developed, it can compare favorably with high-end cemetery projects in the country retaining the respectability and serenity that is expected of a final resting place for our beloved ones.

The project is a joint venture project of Mayor Jose L. Atienza, Jr. and the City Council of Manila with CHC Development Consortium, Inc. and was started December of 2003. It was formally inaugurated last October 28, 2004 by Mayor Jose L. Atienza, Jr. together with officials of the Developer.

RODOLFO "DING" GM. ROXAS

of Lipa City, Batangas

Died in the grace of our Lord
on April 12, 2005 at the age of 68.

He is survived by his wife **Amelita Lasig-Roxas**; children **Amafe & Arnel, Roseo & Mavic, Gerard & Me-Anne, Mercedes, Manette & Randy, Bernadette & Steve**; grandchildren, brothers & sisters, in-laws request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at the Baltazar Chapel, Funeraria Paz, Sucat, Parañaque.

Interment will be on April 17, 2005 at the Lipa City Catholic Cemetery after the 2 p.m. Mass at the Basilica of St. Sebastian.

BUSINESS

RP seen posting slowest growth among Asean-4

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund expects the Philippine economy to grow by only 4.7 percent this year and 4.5 percent in 2006, the slowest expansion projection among four major Southeast Asian economies or the Asean-4.

In its latest World Economic Outlook (WEO) released yesterday, the IMF also projected that inflation rate in the country would rise to 6.8 percent this year but would ease to 4.9 percent next year, the highest among the so-called Asean-4 (Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand).

The IMF's new growth outlook for the country for this year was an upgrade from an earlier forecast of 4.2 percent, but was less optimistic than the government's own targets.

The government's medium-term development plan forecasts a growth of 5.3-6.3 percent for this year, 6.3-7.3 percent for next year and 6.5-7.5 percent for 2007.

The IMF warned that the eventual pass-through of oil prices would adversely affect demand in some countries. In the case of the Philippines, every $10 per barrel rise in oil prices will chop off 3/4 percentage points from its economic growth and 1.25 percent from its current account surplus, according to IMF estimates.

"In addition, excess capacity in the IT (information technology) sector could take longer than expected to work off, endangering the expected pick-up in domestic demand and external demand—particularly in Japan and Europe—could be weaker than expected," the report said.

"The Philippines and Indonesia are also relatively exposed to higher US interest rates," it noted.

The ongoing depreciation of the US dollar, the IMF believes, could become disorderly and lead to even weaker global growth.

Even the Asian Development Bank's forecast of 5 percent growth for the Philippines for the next two years was more bullish than the IMF's. The slowdown projected this year is expected by many due to weaker global demand and local agricultural output.

The IMF expects the Asean-4 to grow by an average of 5.4 percent this year and 5.8 percent, with Malaysia growing the fastest at 6 percent this year and 6.2 percent in 2006.

Thailand is seen growing by 5.6 percent and 6.2 percent for 2005 and 2006, and Indonesia by 5.5 percent and 6 percent, for the respective years.

Overall, "Emerging Asia" is expected to grow by a robust 7 percent this year and 6.9 percent next year, sustaining the 7.8 percent expansion in 2004.

"Emerging Asia," which the fund defines to include China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and the Philippines—had grown rapidly over the past three decades and is considered to be an increasingly dynamic force in the global economy.

The outlook also warned that the objectives of maintaining low inflation and nominal exchange rate stability remained a key issue across the region.

9 firms interested in Calaca plant

By Abigail L. Ho

NINE local and foreign firms have expressed interest to join the bidding for the 600-megawatt (MW) Calaca coal-fired power plant in Batangas.

It is the second major National Power Corp. asset to be placed on the auction block since the start of the privatization process for the power agency.

Froilan Tampinco, Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) vice president for asset management and electricity trading, said these companies had submitted letters of intent expressing their interest in the Napocor asset.

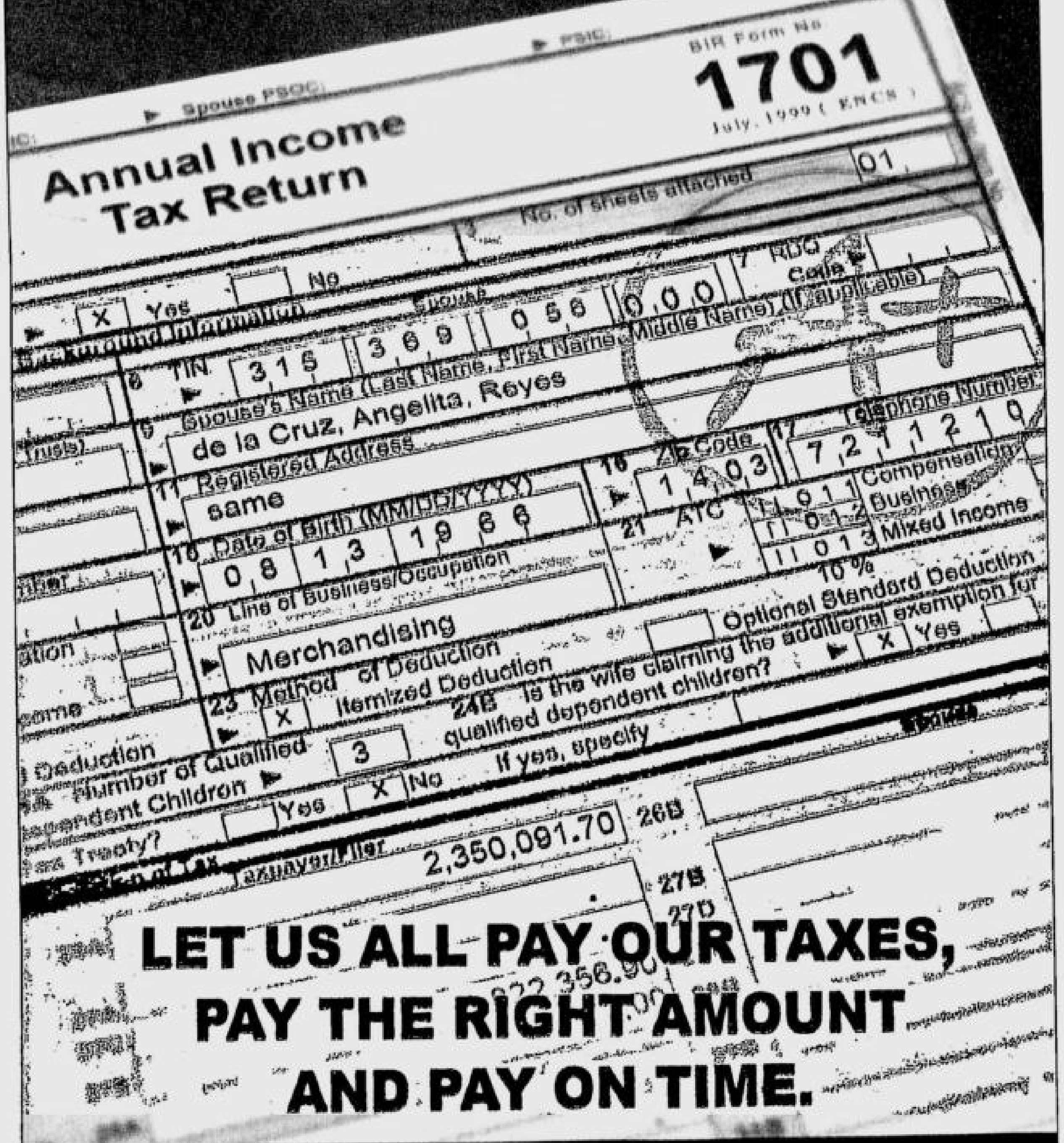
He said the big number of companies that submitted letters of intent was an indication of the marketability of the Calaca plant.

"It also indicates that the government's privatization program is moving, contrary to what critics are claiming," he added.

The pre-bidding conference for the Calaca plant will be held today. The deadline for the submission of bids has been set for May 18.

PSALM has so far sold five Napocor plants—four hydroelectric and one coal-fired. These are the 35-MW Talomo plant in Davao for $1.37 million, the 1.6-MW Agusan plant in Bukidnon for $1.53 million, the 1.8-MW Barit plant in Camarines Sur for $480,000, the 0.4-MW Cawayan plant in Sorsogon for $410,410, the 1.2-MW Loboc plant in Bohol for $1.42 million, and the 600-MW Masinloc coal-fired plant in Zambales for $561.74 million.

Last February, PSALM said it was adopting a new privatization strategy that grouped the gencos for sale according to the types of fuels they use.



ON APRIL 15, THE ENTIRE NATION SHALL BE TAKING A TEST IN HONESTY

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AND PAY ON TIME.

BIR
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PLDT OVERALL BEST MANAGED COMPANY

VAT on airline, shipping passenger revenues opposed

AN ECONOMIST warned Congress against subjecting passenger revenues of airlines and shipping companies to value-added tax (VAT), saying this would result in about P2 billion in losses instead of beefing up government revenues.

Victor Abola of the University of Asia and Pacific said the VAT blueprint proposed by Sen. Ralph Recto—which was now nearing passage in the Senate—contained an "innocent-looking" provision that included passenger revenues of airlines and shipping firms in the VAT net.

"It is even more painful to realize that the ultimate beneficiaries of this part of the Recto proposal will be rich people who own these carriers and supplier companies. It certainly adds insult to the poor salaried taxpayer," Abola argued.

Subjecting passenger revenues of airlines and shipping firms to VAT, Abola said, would result in a net loss of VAT revenue for the government.

"Instead of really taxing rich people, the government will be giving them tax money," Abola said in a study sent to INQUIRER.

In the VAT system, Abola noted that zero rating of export sales made it possible to have a negative VAT credit as VAT output is zero while there was plenty of VAT inputs. Under such a situation, the net effect would be negative, which means the company will even be eligible for refund or credit.

In cases where earnings come from domestic and foreign sources, the concerned industry or company will possibly have negative VAT if foreign revenues exceed domestic revenues. The higher the share of the foreign revenue is to total revenue, the bigger the negative VAT is, he said.

For international/foreign passenger operations, Recto proposed a zero rate for the airline/shipping industry.

Abola said the VAT inputs for the air transport industry would be about P21.9 billion using 2004 figures.

"Ten percent of this is P2.19 billion. This is the net negative VAT that will have to be returned to the airline industry in the form of tax credits. This was higher than the P274.1 million VAT on domestic passengers. The net loss then to the government is the difference between the two or some P1.915 billion," he explained.

He said the situation in the shipping industry was a bit different. Since only 40 percent of the revenue comes from international shipping of goods, a positive net VAT could be expected.

Based on estimates of the Department of Finance, domestic passengers pay some P410.32 million for VAT, while a negative VAT of P313.02 million is credited to international passenger carriers. Thus, including shipping passengers in VAT will add only P97.30 million to the net VAT revenue, he said.

"In this case, the estimated gain is so small that an error in the methodology or figures could end up negatively for the government. There is no pressing case to include it in VAT," he said. *Doris C. Dumlao*

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5.0MM - 9,999,999	6.000	6.250	6.375	6.500
10 million and up	6.250	6.500	6.750	7.000

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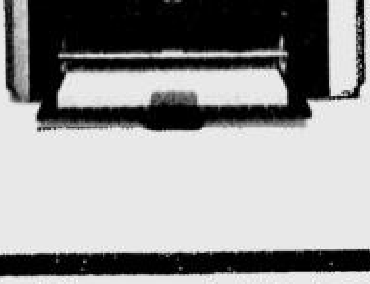

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Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

MONDAY **ARTS & BOOKS** ● TUESDAY **FITNESS** ● WEDNESDAY **2BU** ● THURSDAY **FOOD** ● FRIDAY **FASHION & BEAUTY**

Meet Marketman

By Anne A. Jambora
Photos by Roger Carpio

Click your mouse and access this Website devoted to what veggies, fruits, seafood and organic produce are available in the big public markets

THE WET market, that unsung hardworking district of the town that stirs to life before a cock can crow at dawn, has finally found a home. Know what's fresh, what's new, what's exceptionally good at the wet market with just the click of your mouse.

By regularly checking out www.marketmanila.com, say goodbye to days of sending off clueless Inday to the market. You even get a good dose of food history as you go along.

Meet Mr. Marketman, a well-traveled, highly successful management consultant who loves to buy, cook and eat a really good meal. He may not be a chef by profession, but having lived 15 years abroad—New York, Jakarta, Singapore, Melbourne, Europe, etc.—and delightfully scoured each city's market, he sure knows his arugula from his red lettuce, his wok from his Dutch oven.

Let the Marketman do all the dirty work—combing the local market with all its unpleasant smell in search of what's available for the day. Just slouch in a soft chair before your PC in the comforts of your home and, voila, you've got yourself an idea for the week's menu.

Over 4,500 hits

"The website started out as a personal thing, a diary, a gift I gave to myself for Christmas. It's a weird feeling that there are actually people out there checking out my site," he says. No fancy descriptions, no unnecessary euphemisms, no pompous words. Just an honest-to-goodness account doused with a witty, acerbic writing style and a healthy sense of humor.

He has in his library over 600 local and foreign food magazines, copies he has actually kept, plus hundreds of cookbooks. And the key to his sanity, he says, is his list of *suki* in the market.

First visited only by his friends, the website rapidly rose in popularity, recording at least 4,500 hits in its first month. Today, it gets feedback from Vietnam, Laos, Korea, Australia, United Arab Emirates, South Africa, Barbados, Brazil, Spain, Switzerland, Italy and United States.

While the website doesn't have a mission other than to record what is there, it helps different groups. For one, foodies who are serious about their food and want to learn more, whether they're Filipinos or foreigners. For another, time-pressed people have no time to do the marketing themselves. Also: OFWs yearning for a familiar dish but can't find ingredients in their vicinity because they don't know the local name (*tangigue* is Spanish mackerel in the US, for example).

On another level, the site creates awareness about unique finds and helps people who grow the produce find a niche in the market.

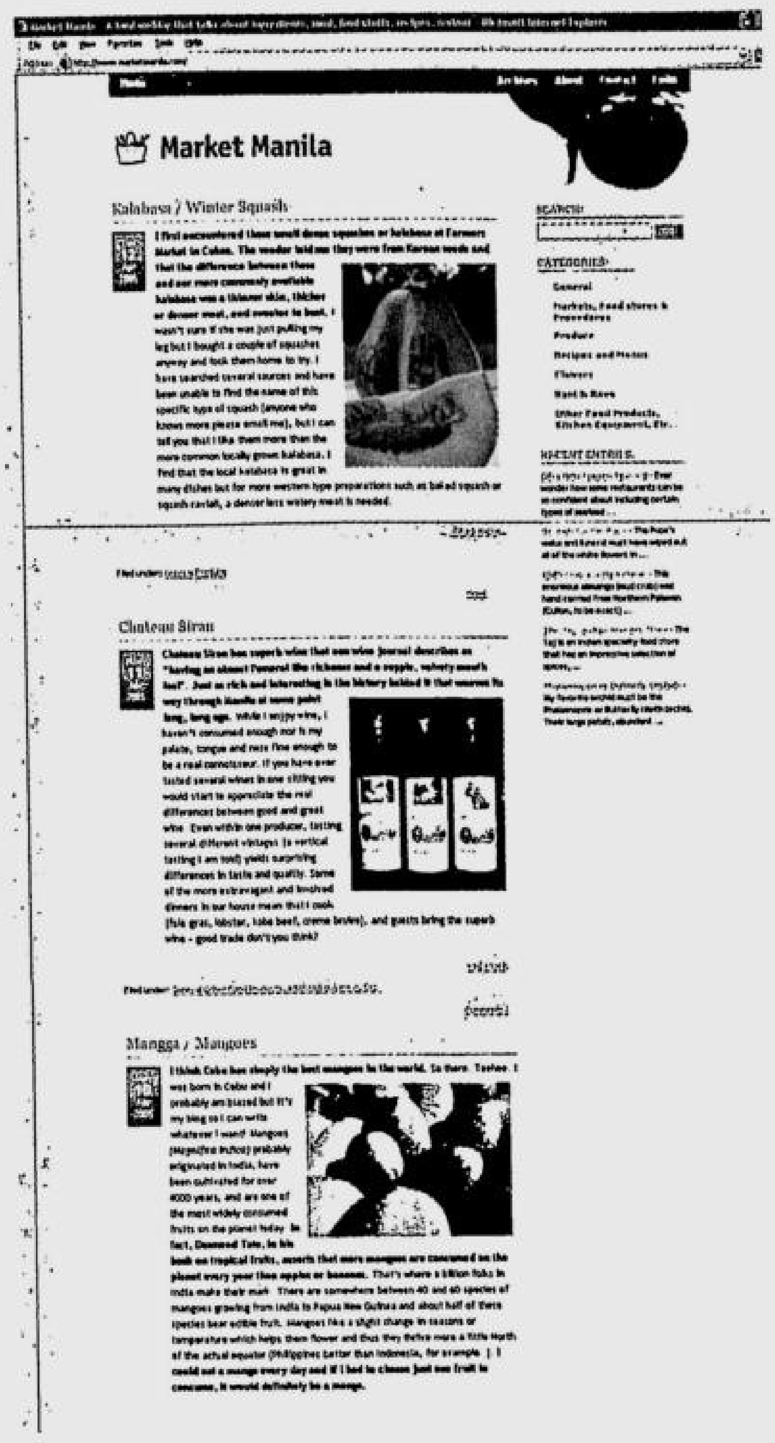
Features

Marketmanila.com features produce, mostly vegetables and fish, actually available in the markets of Metro Manila, as well as kitchen and cooking equipment ("because people have been asking for them"). It also has segments on markets and food stores, recipes and menus, even flowers. Plus an interesting rant and rave section.

"I don't like the hygiene of the meat mar-

MEET/C2

"I LOOK for people who actually grow their produce because they have a real stake in what they're selling, and can tell you about it," the Marketman says.

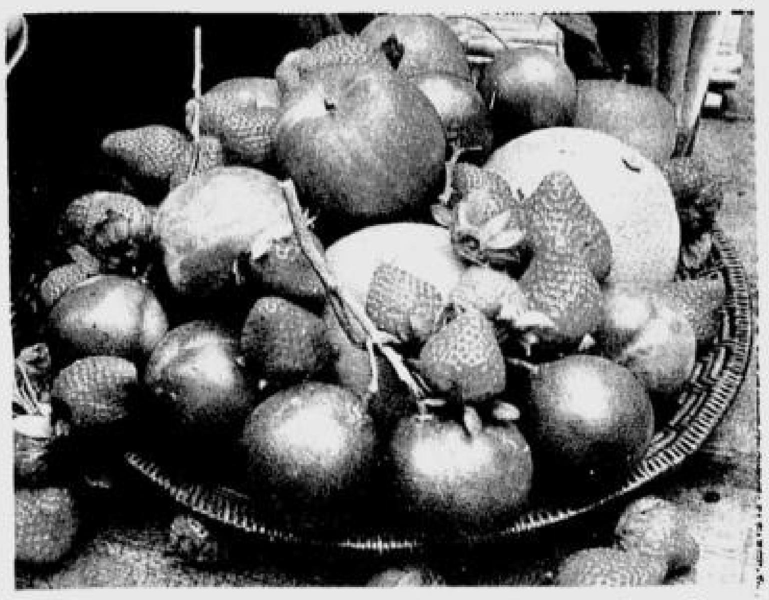


Market Manila

Kalabasa / Winter Squash

Chateau Siran

Mangga / Mangoes



STRAWBERRIES from Baguio, dalandan from Laguna, ruby-red grapefruits from Davao and imported royal gala apples

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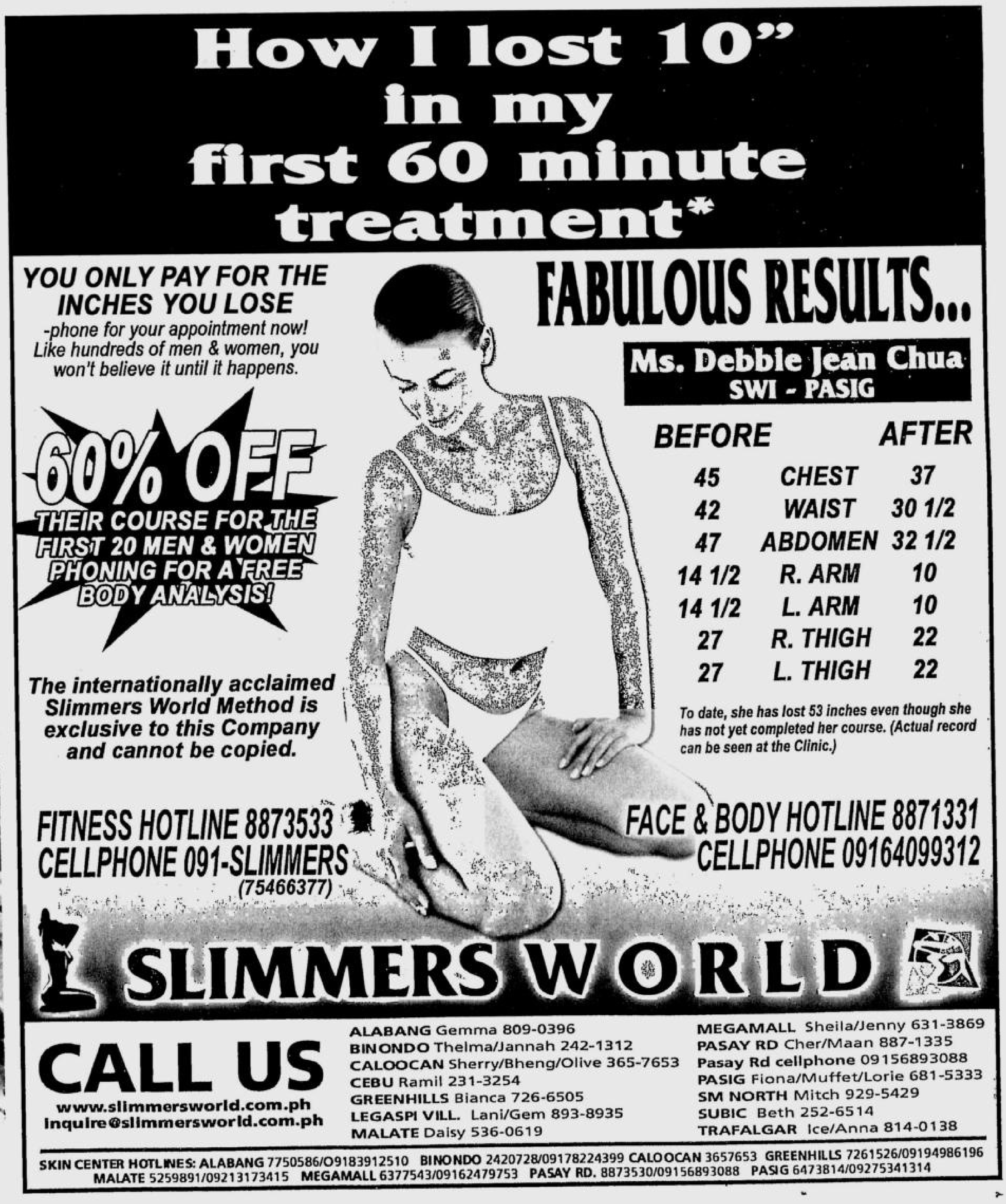

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27	L. THIGH	22

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STIR-FRIED Pork with Holy Basil

JUNGLE Curry

HERBED Crab Meat and Chicken

Thai cooking lessons in a hurry

By Alex Y. Vergara

The Thai Cooking School of The Oriental hotel in Bangkok has half-day classes for short-term visitors

AS THAI cuisine continues to gain popularity among foodies the world over, more and more people are no longer content to simply sample their favorite Thai dishes. Not a few are now flying to Bangkok to learn authentic Thai cooking from the experts.

This trend accounts for the growing popularity of a number of Bangkok-based establishments offering crash courses on Thai cooking to both locals and foreigners—including this journalist who, along with five colleagues from the Philippines, spent an entire morning fumbling around the cool and spotless classroom-cum-kitchen of The Thai Cooking School at The Oriental (www.mandarinoriental.com).

It was a good thing food columnist CJ Juntereal knew her way around the kitchen. Otherwise, we would have been forced to eat food that would have likely bordered on the inedible. Morning classes at The Thai Cooking School usually culminate in lunch, with students eating the very dishes they have prepared.

Daily, weekly classes

The school offers daily and weekly culinary classes (Monday to Saturday) conducted either in English or Thai by Thai chef Sompop Nonta-ud, one of two resident teachers. A course usually takes an entire week, with at least four dishes taught each day.

Tourists on a tight schedule need not worry since they can avail themselves of quick half-day classes. The school's busiest months are from October to January.

"Majority of the dishes we teach here originated from the central part of Thailand, where Bangkok is also located," says Nonta-ud. "We've also included some items from the north and northeast like green papaya salad."

Nonta-ud attributes the growth of Thai cooking schools to the universal appeal of Thai food itself. The 30-year-old chef trained in Thailand and Geneva before joining The Oriental three years ago. One of his dreams is to own and run his own Thai restaurant one day.

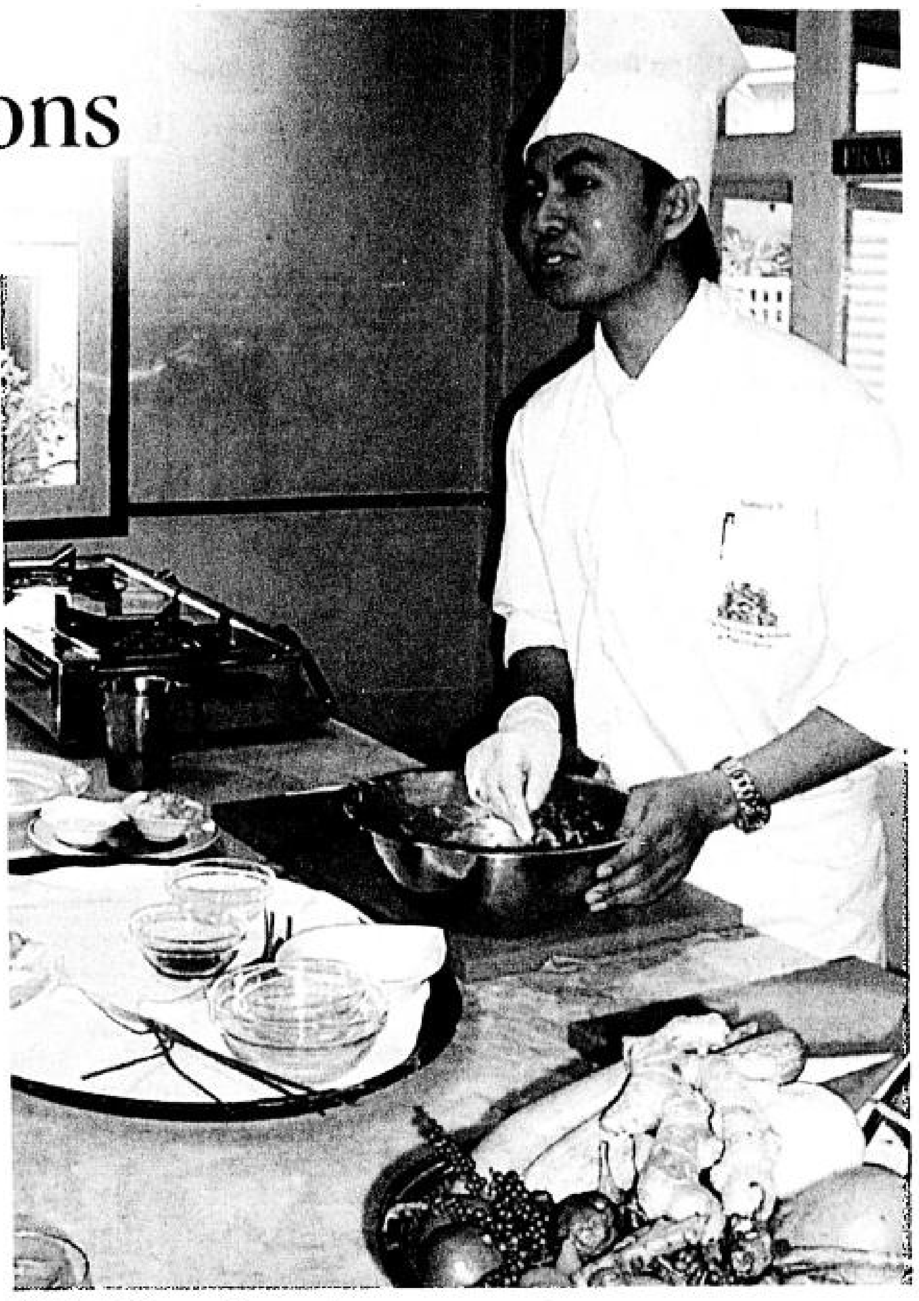
"Not only is Thai food healthy, it also tastes great," he says. "Most foreigners find it very flavorful."

Substantial knowledge

Although his lessons are conducted in a hurry, Nonta-ud believes most of his students learn something substantial from their experience.

"We have had housewives with some background in Thai cooking," he says. "We've even come across international chefs who want to learn more about Asian food, particularly Thai. Americans [constitute] the largest [group] of foreigners in our class. They also happen to be The Oriental's biggest foreign clientele."

Aware that too many [clueless] cooks could spoil the broth, we were simply content to provide assistance as Juntereal did most of the work. Unlike in previous years, the school now encourages students to practice immediately what they've learned.


THAI chef Sompop Nonta-ud

Thus, the half-day we spent in the classroom was divided into lectures and hands-on cooking. To expedite the process, most of the ingredients were already cut, shredded and segregated by the chef's assistants even before we turned on the stove. The school provides all the ingredients, including those hard-to-find Thai spices that give each dish its unique flavor and aroma.

After more than three hours, the group was able to whip up four dishes: Deep-fried Herbed Crabmeat and Chicken (Poo Ja), Jungle Curry (Gaeng Paa), Stir-fried Pork with Holy Basil (Phad Krapow Moo) and Banana in Syrup (Guay Chuaem).

Either the food we cooked was really good or we were just totally famished because we wiped out almost every dish. And—surprise, surprise—no one had to be rushed to the hospital.

Here are two quick Thai recipes for "chefs" on the run:

Phad Kraprow Moo (Stir-Fried Pork with Holy Basil)

1 c pork, minced
2 tbsp garlic, chopped
1 tsp bird's eye chili, crushed
2 tbsp cooking oil
1½ tbsp oyster sauce
1½ tbsp fish sauce
½ tsp white sugar
½ tsp dark soy sauce
5 tbsp chicken stock
2 tbsp red big chili, seeded and cut
2 tbsp Thai green bell pepper, seeded and cut
½ c holy basil
½ tsp ground pepper

Heat a wok, add garlic and bird's eye chili. Stir-fry until fragrant.

Add pork and stir-fry until just cooked. Season with fish sauce, oyster sauce, dark soy sauce, sugar and ground pepper.

Moisten with stock, then add red big chili, Thai bell pepper and holy basil. Stir well.

Sprinkle with crisp fried holy basil before serving.

Serves two to three.

Poo Ja (Deep-Fried Herbed Crab Meat and Chicken)

1 c chicken breast or pork shoulder, minced
2 c crab meat
2 tbsp garlic and coriander root, chopped (1:1 portion)
2 tbsp white soy sauce
½ tsp ground pepper
1 egg
2 tbsp spring onion, sliced

For cucumber relish:
3¼ c white sugar
1½ c vinegar
1 tbsp salt

In a mixing bowl, mix together chicken or pork shoulder with garlic and coriander root. Add soy sauce and pepper and egg. Mix well.

Add crab meat and spring onion. Continue to knead until sticky.

Put the mixture into crab shells and steam for 4-5 minutes until just 80 percent cooked.

Just before serving, coat the mixture of crab meat with beaten egg, then deep-fry until golden brown.

Serve with cucumber relish.

Serves two.

For cucumber relish:

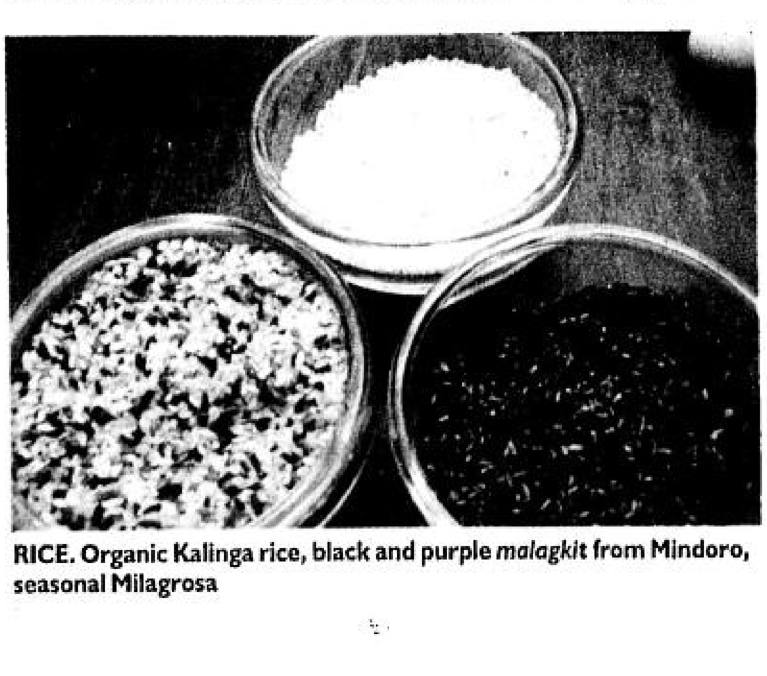
Mix everything together and bring to a boil. Keep reducing until it thickens.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph.

Meet Marketman

From page C1

NATIVE eggplant, western eggplant and miniature Thai eggplants


RICE. Organic Kalinga rice, black and purple *malagkit* from Mindoro, seasonal Milagrosa

ket here, though I do plan on coming up with articles on meat someday," he says. Eventually, he'd also like to do stories on ethnic food.

Readers can have a pretty clear idea of what's in season—if the mangoes are sweet in this market, if the *dapa* (flounder) is indeed fresh in that market, if the Baguio lettuce is crispy here, and just about anything there.

"People should go back to eating what's in season," Marketman says, "because that's when produce is at its peak—the weather conditions are right, sunshine is at a certain level." Not to mention the price is right.

The way they were

The site, according to him, "is a way of sharing information so that increasingly, people can have access to what they want." What's more, it wants to draw awareness of the "old way" of doing things, which, he says, is sometimes still the best way.

For instance, he says the original *ensaymada*, a classic bread from the Spanish times, is flaky, like a croissant, and not the melt-in-your-mouth fluffy stuff being mass-produced today. Or: the real *pan de sal* has a salty taste to it, not sweet; Bicol Express is originally a side dish to *laing*, not a separate dish; the original Thousand Island dressing, a regal Russian creation, had mayo and red caviar that made up the "islands," not mayo and ketchup.

"I like to do authentic, but authentic has a lot of meaning, depending on where you're from," he says. *Adobo* can be cooked with *toyo* or no *toyo*, for example.

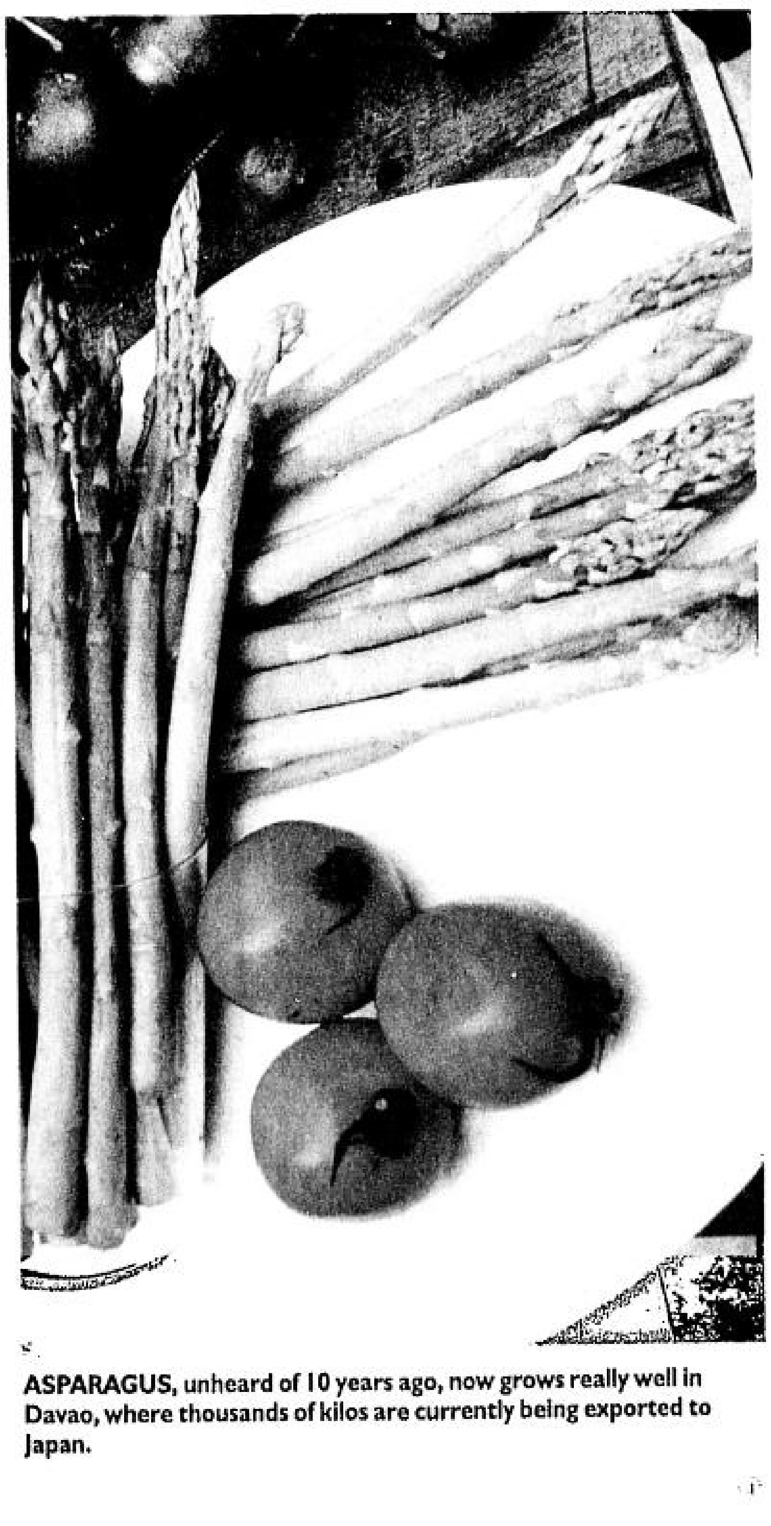
Although the Marketman does have physical limitations—he is naturally incapable of going through ALL the markets in the metro—his website is about what food items are currently available, how they are grown and where to get them. Best part about it is you get to meet the vendors, so to speak.

"Eventually, I tell the vendors who I am, that I feature them on my website, so there's this trust. But I don't take anything from them for doing it. The website is nonprofit, not driven by any outside forces. I like to keep it that way," he says.

The marketplace, he says, used to be the heart of every town, similar to a town plaza or church, where everyone met to catch up on the latest *tsismis* or news. Today, if so much as look at the cart of someone in the supermarkets or, worse, try to start a conversation, you will be suspected of being crazy.

"What I have to offer is nothing fancy," he says. All he hopes for is to once again entice people to visit the marketplace.

E-mail the author at ajambora@inquirer.com.ph


ASPARAGUS, unheard of 10 years ago, now grows really well in Davao, where thousands of kilos are currently being exported to Japan.

Cost-saving, cleaner technology for diesel

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

WITH THE PRICE of fuel increasing by the week, a new technology diesel introduced recently to the media may be welcome news to long-suffering consumers. The promised benefits—among them, better fuel economy and remarkable reduction in pollution—will be realized after using the premium diesel for six months.

Officials of Oxonica, the company involved in the patented technology, claimed that they had developed "a fuel process that can reduce fuel consumption by 10 percent and particulate pollution from diesel engine emissions by 14 percent."

The officials explained that their diesel, called Envirox, had already been tested on thousands of vehicles in Europe and Asia. As a result, they added, the transport giant Stagecoach in the United Kingdom was now using Envirox-treated fuels for its fleet of 7,000 buses.

Similar field trials would be conducted anytime now in Manila, the officials announced. Involved in the technology development, including the extensive test runs, are Oxonica, Asian Development Bank and the World Bank's Initiative for Asian Cities program.

In the Philippines, DMX Technology Corporation represents Envirox and the Premium Plus technology diesel.

T-shirt shocks

I was utterly shocked by the picture in my mail. It was of a foreigner wearing a T-shirt with the outrageous text "F--k Your God" printed in big fonts.

The horrible photo accompanied a letter from Robert E. Bachmann, president and chief executive officer of Relzbach Ventures, Inc. In his letter relating the incident, he recalled the reaction of the hotel management to his complaint.

He said at the front of the offending shirt was the wounded face of Jesus Christ and the texts "Decide" and "The Scars of the Crucifix." Like the rest of the patrons at the restaurant, he thought the T-shirt carried a spiritual message until the man marched across the dining room and everyone read the text at the back.

Bachmann was even more shocked by the response of the hotel management to his complaint. He wrote, "The hotel management had ruled out my complaint and considered the situation as a mere freedom of expression, and that it was nothing to be bothered about."

He quoted the explanation of the manager on duty that night: "First, that the hotel respects the freedom of expression of the guests. Second, the hotel cannot hold anything against its hotel guests (unless) a guest inflicts harm or upsets other hotel occupants."

Bachmann concluded, "If (this hotel) management were to prioritize the values of other countries against ours, they might as well pack up and leave... they could have simply advised the man that his t-shirt was morally unacceptable to (us based on our own) standards."

Organic produce

Here is news for consumers wanting to buy organic vegetables, health food and eco-friendly products.

There will be a bazaar April 22-24 called Samu't-Sari 2005 that will sell the following items: organic food, personal and home care products, eco-friendly products, reading materials, arts and crafts items and many more. The venue will be the National Ecology Center on East Avenue, Quezon City (across the Philippine Heart Center).

Events organizers are Zero Waste National Recycling Movement of the Philippines Foundation, Inc., Alternative Lyfstyle Mktg. and Consultancy (AlterMktg)

For more information, call 9254718/6555674 or 0917-4777749 and 0918-4210729.

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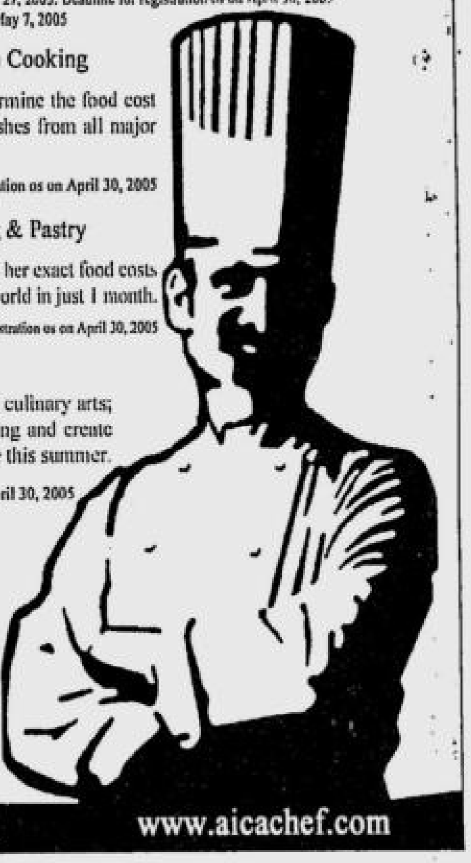

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Chefs' school shares Death by Chocolate recipe

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

AFTER last week's column, I had lunch with Norbert Gandler, Hans Schallenberg and Humphrey Navarro of the International School for Culinary Arts and Hotel Management (ISCAHM) to ask them some of the questions sent in by readers and to tour their facilities.

Here are their answers and a glimpse of what goes on in their kitchen. (Thanks, guys, lunch was delicious as usual!)

What makes ISCAHM a cut above the rest?

TIM K.

The faculty, our combined experiences and our facilities!

Do you promise jobs to your graduates?

M. DE GUZMAN, BAGUIO

No, but we can recommend and guide them toward their desired career paths in the industry. No one can guarantee employment, but we could refer them to our colleagues who are in need of chefs, but of course, getting the job and staying on the job is entirely up to them.

The culinary program gets a lot of attention. What about the pastry program? I've heard people rave about it.

REGGIE ASPIRAS

(Oh that's me! I just had to ask this question because no one asked! Considering the opportunity, this might be a good move for those who have the passion for it.)

The secret: Ernie Babaran! Even at the Mandarin, our visiting guest chefs had declared him a genius! A perfectionist! His recipes are the best! Ah, but pastry, that's something I've been wondering about. People seem to be more into culinary arts. We've even been receiving calls from our colleagues, even those overseas asking us for pastry chefs. There seems to be a shortage these days.

How long are the programs?

PILAR ROMAN

You'll have to call ISCAHM at tel. 9268888 and 9201481.

A reader has asked what makes Gandler so different from other chef-teachers. For Gandler to answer this and hoist himself up on a pedestal, would make him blush! I think he's painfully modest! So I'm taking the liberty of answering this question.

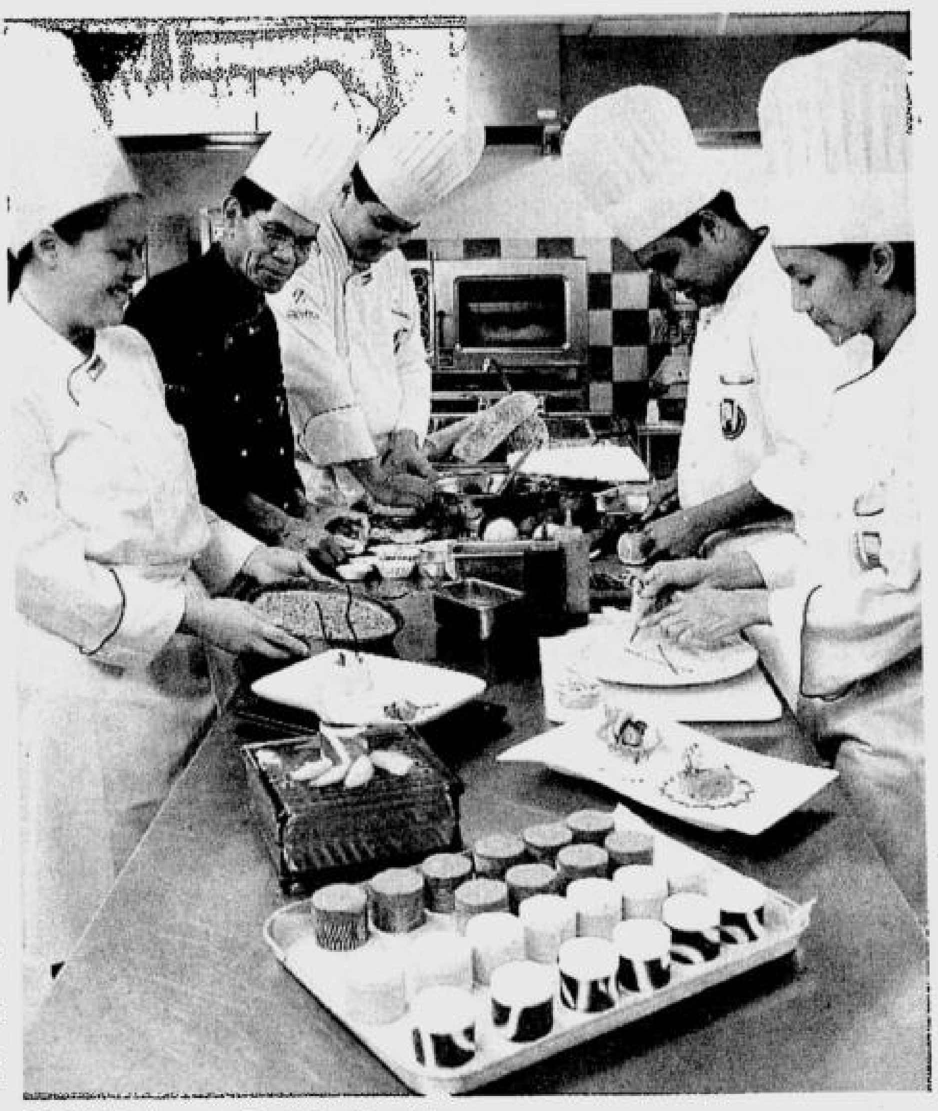
From what I know, a "cocktail" of things makes him different. His appetite for excellence is insatiable, his devotion to his craft, exemplary and the patience he has for those under his wing, much to be admired! But what makes him special, as I was told by those who've had the privilege to work with him once upon a time, is that, as a mentor, Gandler is gentle, encouraging and very inspiring. Always wanting you to do better, always wanting you to succeed!

Can I have a recipe for a really delicious chocolate cake for my business?

MYLEN, DUBAI

During one of my visits to ISCAHM, I had a piece of Death by Chocolate. Here's the recipe:

The faculty, the chefs' combined experiences and the facilities make ISCAHM a cut above the rest



PLATING desserts, Death by Chocolate

Death by Chocolate

(Winner of ISCAHM in-school competition, chocolate cake category)

Cocoa Meringue
4 egg whites
1 g cream of tartar
1 g salt
210 g sugar, refined
12 g unsweetened cocoa powder, sifted
6 g cornstarch

Put egg whites, tartar, salt in electric mixer with a balloon whip

Whisk on high until soft peaks form, for 45-50 seconds. Gradually add 1 c sugar, while whisking on high speed. Whisk until stiff.

With rubber spatula fold in combined ¼ c sugar, cocoa powder and cornstarch

Fill pastry bag, pipe meringue in circles

Chocolate Brownie
300 g dark couverture (available in Santis, Chef's Nook-7245812 and Sweet Craft -09176269901)
40 g cocoa powder, sifted
250 g butter
420 g eggs
500 g sugar, refined
15 ml vanilla extract
3 g salt
340 g flour, all purpose

Melt chocolate and butter over warm water bath. Stir to combine. Add cocoa and sugar.

Mix in eggs, vanilla and salt. Whisk on high speed till thick and light.

Temper chocolate-butter mixture into egg mixture.

Gently fold in flour and chocolate.

Pour on parchment-lined sheet pan.

Bake 350 °F (175 °C) oven until firm to touch.

Cool completely before turning out cake.

Shape into 2 round pieces using round cake pan as pattern.

Chocolate Ganache
360 ml cream
18 g butter, unsalted
617 g dark couverture

Melt chocolate and butter over hot water bath.

Boil cream and add it to the chocolate-butter mixture.

Mocha Mousse
514 g dark couverture
120 ml water
24 g instant coffee
12 g cocoa, sifted
5 egg whites
12 g sugar, refined
180 ml cream

Melt chocolate, coffee and cocoa over hot water bath.

Whisk egg whites and sugar until stiff.

Whip cream.

Fold in cream and egg whites into chocolate mixture. Refrigerate.

Ganache Glaze
225 g dark couverture, chopped
112 g heavy cream

Boil cream in saucepan over medium heat.

Add to chopped dark couverture.

Mix till smooth.

Mocha Rum Sauce
170 g butter, unsalted
290 g sugar, refined
320 ml cream
48 g cocoa, sifted
45 ml rum
2 g salt
24 g instant coffee
5 ml vanilla extract

Melt chocolate over hot water bath. Add sugar, cream, cocoa, rum and salt. Whisk to combine.

Bring to boil, simmer five minutes.

Remove from heat. Add coffee, vanilla extract and rum. Serve hot or cold.

Assembly:

Put a layer of Chocolate Brownie.

Top with 1 1/2 c Chocolate Ganache.

Arrange Cocoa Meringue on top of Chocolate Ganace.

Spread Mocha Mousse on top of Cocoa Meringue.

Put remaining Chocolate Brownie.

Chill cake.

Pour Ganache Glaze over cake.

Decorate as you wish.

Serve with sauce.

For questions and comments, text 0917-8399888

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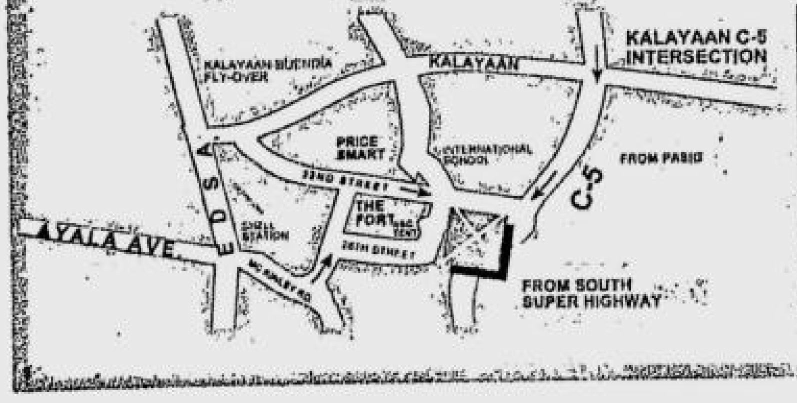

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JILL Sandique

GOLDA Laurel-Liamzon

JACQUI Alleje

Non-singing foodies welcome

Popular karaoke joint Red Box jazzes up its menu to be a dining fave, too

Text by Belle V. Bondoc
Photos by Rudy Esperas

WHAT happens when you bring together three accomplished chefs under the roof of an elegant karaoke restaurant? You get a culinary concert that results in a menu that pleases even the most discriminating taste.

Three high-powered women in the culinary field got together recently to demonstrate their creativity by composing special dishes for the hippest karaoke place in the metropolis, the Red Box Karaoke.

When Red Box opened in December 2003, it generated a buzz as a venue for karaoke parties. But now the goal of the entertainment center in Greenbelt 3 is changing.

"We want to be known not just as an entertainment place with a great sound system and a wide music database but also as a restaurant/bar that serves quality food," said Paolo del Rosario, marketing and promotions director.

At their most recent event, Red Box management presented guest chefs Jill Sandique, a pastry and bread specialist, Jacqui Alleje, a South Beach Diet authority and Golda Laurel-Liamzon of Mama Rosa's chain of restaurants.

The trio introduced nine new dishes. Del Rosario said they represented the "versatility in dining" that Red Box wanted to achieve.

More specifically, what Red Box wanted was for the three women to create dishes using locally available ingredients in flavorful and inviting combinations.

Medleys

The chefs showed that a simple, standard dish could be jazzed up and turned into something unusual, nutritious and delicious. Each dish represented a fusion of culinary influences.

"Our job is to make [the food we prepare] safe, contemporary and as practical as possible," said Alleje.

Sandique created several dishes using the Pinoy favorite *lechon*. The Lechon Flakes with Onion-Tomato Slaw was a perfect one-of-a-kind viand consisting of hand-shredded succulent roast suckling pig, deep-fried to perfection and served with vinaigrette. The Sinigang na Lechon consisted of meat cubes and assorted vegetables cooked in a sour broth. *Lechon* was also used for another Pinoy favorite, the *sisig*. Lechon Sisig was cooked in chili sauce, mayonnaise, *calamansi* juice and black pepper.

Alleje, who has become familiar with Filipino cooking, prepared simple but healthy dishes using organic ingredients. Her easy-to-prepare recipes included Seared Tuna Pomelo Arugula Salad, an invigorating blend of East and West that consisted of tuna fillet in logs, greens and pomelo slices; the Pesto Bangus Belly with Organic Brown Rice and Stuffed Okra, Dagupan Bangus was cooked with very little fat, marinated in pesto sauce, grilled, pan-fried with okra stuffed with bell peppers and *kesong puti*; and Spicy Caramelized Onion Soup, sweet caramelized onions, bolstered by roasted shallots and garlic,

NON-SINGING/D2

LECHON Flakes with Onion-Tomato Slaw

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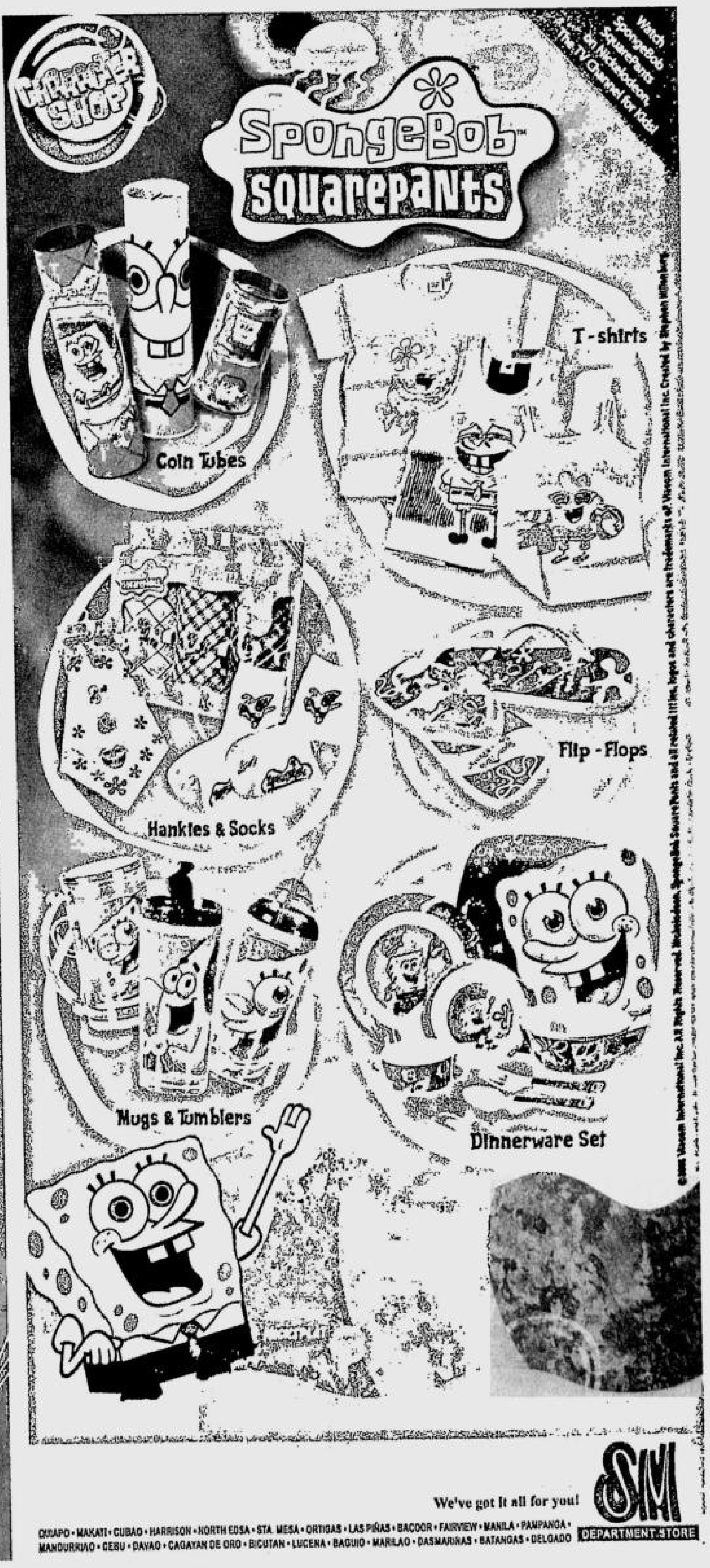

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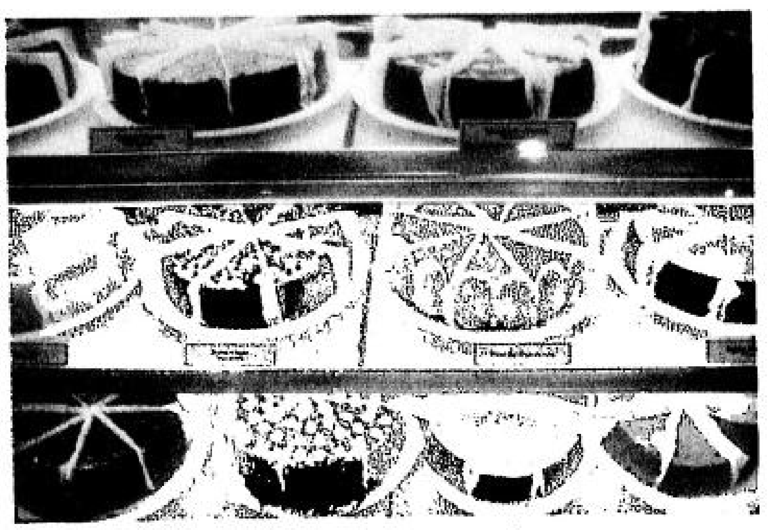
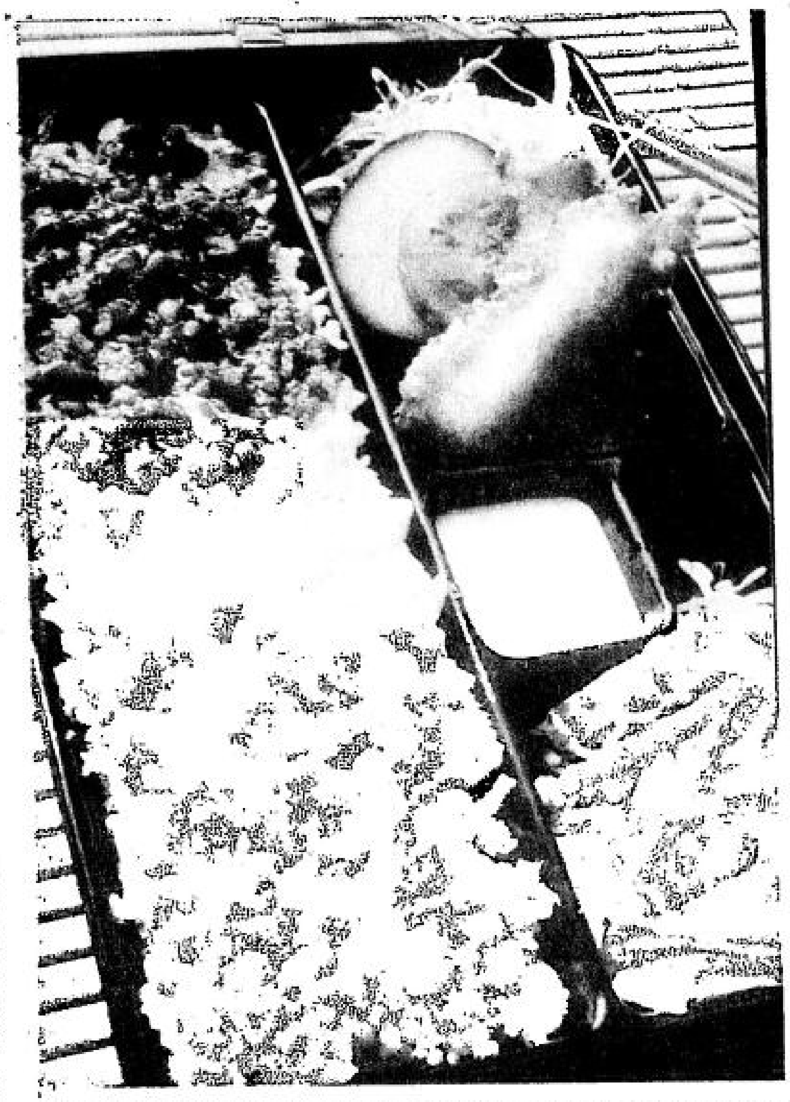
FRESH and definitely savory. Karate Kid's California Maki


DESSERT assortments. Some of the luxurious cakes at Café d'Angelo

More than just a shopping destination


PORK SOBORRO, Arigato Express' good blend of meat, egg, veggies and rice

VISITORS at the new SM City Fairview Annex may find that it is more than just a shopping destination but also a place for food discoveries.

The annex boasts of some of the most exciting restaurants in town, including five where meals are available at affordable prices.

Arigato Express and Karate Kid specialize in Japanese food, Tsim Sha Tsui serves Hong Kong-style Chinese food, Chef d'Angelo offers fusion Italian cuisine, while Ted's La Paz Batchoy celebrates Ilonggo cooking.

Arigato's Alen Enriquez, whose family had long been in the restaurant business, said Arigato Express was born out of their love for Japanese food. Arigato Express resulted from his and his four siblings' experimentation on quality Japanese food at reasonable prices.

Its bestsellers are the teriyaki and tempura meals. Budget meals, Japanese dishes prepared the Filipino way, are also very popular. Other specialties include Ika Fry (deep-fried squid), and innovative sandwiches like Burger Katsu Cheese and Kani Egg San, which use real Japanese sauces and herbs.

Those who like Japanese food with a Western twist may like Karate Kid. Michael Ang said he wanted to combine the American fast food concept and authentic Japanese cuisine.

Karate Kid's specialties are Chicken and Pork BBQ Teriyaki, Karate Chop (pork or chicken), Sizzling Tofu and 12 rice toppings, all at affordable prices.

Tsim Sha Tsui, named after the popular business district in Hong Kong, is the project of five friends who wanted to bring the experience of eating out in Hong Kong to a mall.

TSIM SHA Tsui's Suckling Pig, the resto's new addition to its long list of specialties.

Carlito Arenas, one of the directors, said the restaurant used special Hong Kong sauces, chicken powder and other ingredients to give food a distinctive flavor without the use of vetsin or monosodium glutamate (MSG).

Bestsellers at Tsim Sha Tsui are lobsters and *lapu-lapu*, as well as the Three-way Duck.

Aside from pasta and pizzas, Chef d'Angelo also offers chicken, burger and waffle dishes. Heidi Ng, who runs the place together with sister Elaine and business partner Henry Ang, said they wanted to serve "exquisitely cooked food in a casual atmosphere."

Favorites among clients include Mozza-mushroom dip and their own special Baguio Strawberry Cheesecake. Service is also quick, averaging 5-10 minutes.

Ted's Oldtimer LaPaz Batchoy offers an authentic version of the traditional Ilonggo specialty at the mall.

EXTRA super, the original La Paz Batchoy being sold since 1945 at Ted's OldTimer La Paz Batchoy

But Mae Borro, whose grandfather Ted Lepura founded the chain of Batchoy outlets, said the place serves other versions of the old favorite like Extra Super Batchoy, Sotanghon and Bihon Batchoy, served with special *puto* from Iloilo.

Non-singing foodies welcome

From page D1

and served with whole-wheat foccacia.

Laurel-Liamzon came up with a Filipino-Italian medley, perfect for those with adventurous palates, that consisted of the Spicy Tuyo Pasta (cooked with *tuyo* flakes, button mushrooms and lemon juice), Taba ng Talangka Risotto (crab fat and tomato puree risotto topped with crispy crab meat and fresh coriander springs) and the Original Pinoy Panini (spicy *tuyo* flakes from Mama Rosa with *kesong puti* and sweet tomato with roasted garlic and Dijon mustard spread on toasted baguettini).

Most advance

Red Box claims to have the biggest (300 sq m) and most advance kitchen facilities among Greenbelt 3's restaurants.

SEARED Tuna Pomelo Arugula Salad

It offers a wide array of choices from pizza to pasta, salads, sandwiches, main entrées and desserts. It also has an extensive range of alcoholic beverages.

Del Rosario said the restaurant's emphasis on value for money remained. "Here, people can achieve total satisfaction [as we bring the] entertainment to another level. They get good music and good food, while spending about the same amount of money they'll spend in fine dining restaurants," said Del Rosario.

Del Rosario also said, as an added treat, customers could have any room in the house for free for three hours from 12 noon-3 p.m. by simply ordering set lunches.

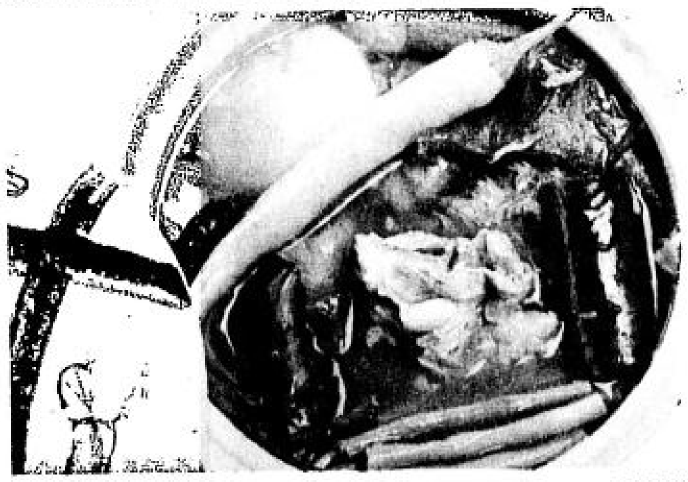
The special dishes whipped up by the three chefs are now available for dinner. This means if you love eating but not singing or if you love both, you can have a great time at Red Box.

Red Box Karaoke at 3/L, Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center, Makati City, is open from 12 noon-3 a.m. the following day. Call 7576188.

E-mail the author at bbondoc @inquirer.com.ph.

SPICY Tuyo Pasta

Three from three


SINIGANG na Lechon

PESTO Bangus Belly with Organic Brown Rice and Stuffed Okra

OPP (Original Pinoy Panini)

(From chef Golda Laurel-Liamzon)

1 ¼ heads roasted garlic, mashed
½ c mayonnaise
1 tbsp Dijon mustard
salt and pepper to taste
3 pcs spicy *tuyo*, deboned and flaked
3 pcs *kesong puti*, sliced
Parmesan spaghetti sauce
3 pcs fresh basil leaves
1 leaf lettuce (butterhead or lolo rossa)
2 pcs sliced salad tomatoes
1 pc baguettini

Put the garlic, mayonnaise and Dijon mustard in a food processor and pulse until a paste is formed. Keep in a clean bottle or Tupperware.

Heat the tomato sauce in a pan. Cool then place in a squeeze bottle.

Slice the baguettini half way in the middle. Put in oven toaster and heat until top turns slightly golden brown and crunchy.

Apply a generous amount of the roasted garlic spread on both panels of the baguettini. Place the lettuce, tomatoes, slight drizzle of Hunt's sauce, *kesong puti*, basil leaves and *tuyo flakes* between the baguettini halves. Serve warm with a siding of chips.

Makes one sandwich

Pesto Bangus Belly with Organic Brown Rice and Stuffed Okra

(From chef Jacqui Alleje)

½ Pesto Bangus Belly (available at Rizal Dairy at Market! Market!)

ORIGINAL Pinoy Panini

1 tbsp cooking oil
1 c organic brown rice
2 tbsp tomato sauce

Siding:
2 pcs okra
1 tbsp finely diced *kesong puti*
1 tbsp finely diced red bell pepper
1 tsp chopped onion
2 tbsp tomato sauce
fresh basil/parsley, for garnishing

Blanch okra in slightly salted water until crisp tender.

Saute bell pepper and onion with salt and pepper. Stuff in one okra.

Season *kesong puti* with salt, pepper and paprika and stuff it in another okra.

Grill *bangus* belly.

Plate belly with organic brown rice.

Arrange okra on tomato sauce.

Serve hot.

Sinigang na Lechon

(From chef Jill Sandique)

900 g lechon, cubed
2 tbsp cooking oil
170 g onions, sliced
170 g tomatoes, sliced
1 pack *sinigang* mix, or more (22 g)
Salt, to taste
Patis , to taste
9-10 c water
210-250 g *sitaw*, about 14-16 pcs
80 g *kangkong*
170 g okra, about 6 pcs
350 g eggplant, about 4 pcs
300 g radish, about 2 pcs
350-400 g yams, optional
2 pcs green chili

In a kettle, heat oil. Add the onions, then the tomatoes. Sauté for 3-5 minutes or until the onions become transparent.

Add the *sinigang* mix, salt and a little *patis*. Add the cubed *lechon*. Cook for 2-3 minutes.

Add water, cover and allow to boil for five minutes. Add yams and radish.

Cook covered until almost tender.

Remove cover then add the rest of the vegetables except *kangkong*.

Cook until tender.

Add *kangkong*. Cook until wilted.

Adjust seasonings. Serve hot.

Serves four to six.

Nicely cheesy stuff

Cheddar Puffs require 'strong-arm' tactics but they are great summer snacks

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Roger Carpio

PREHEAT oven to 450°F. To prepare pan, line two cookie sheets with Glad Bake paper.

IN A MEDIUM-SIZE saucepan, put water, butter and salt. Bring to a boil over high heat.

WANT a great-tasting snack with real cheese?

I'm not talking about cheese sticks that you often get as cocktail munchies or something to nibble on while you are waiting for the main course.

These cheesy treats are Cheddar Puffs. Made with real cheese, they are light and delicious, ideal for summer snack with your favorite beverage.

Cheddar Puffs are prepared in bite-sized portions and baked.

They are not difficult to make. Naturally, with Cheddar Puffs you start with cheddar cheese. But the dough used for Cheddar Puffs is actually the same as that used for cream puffs—small, hollow puffs made from choux pastry (cream-puff pastry) filled with sweetened whipped cream or custard.

Chef Ana Limjap Park demonstrates how to prepare this cheese recipe. "You only need a strong arm for mixing the dough. Other than that, you [should have no problem] with the other procedures," says Park, who runs, along with partner-chefs Pria Chiongbian Solon and Melanie Cruz, Cooking Basics Culinary Studio, a cooking center that offers hands-on recreational cooking classes.

Park says after mixing the butter, water, salt and flour in a saucepan, stir the mixture vigorously with a wooden spoon until the dough forms a ball and does not cling to the sides of the pan. After the addition of the eggs, the dough should be smooth and satiny.

You may fill each Cheddar Puff with a cube of cheese before baking and top with stuffed olive afterwards.

"This recipe can be doubled or tripled if you have the stamina to handle a large recipe," says Park.

The Cooking Basics recreational culinary center is at the G/F Unit 5, Vivere Suites, Asean Drive, Filinvest Corporate City, Alabang, Muntinlupa City. Call 7710082 or e-mail cookingbasics@pacific.net.ph.

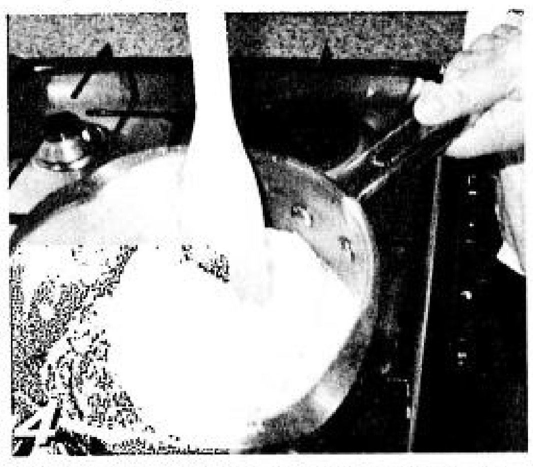
Ingredients

1 c water
½ c unsalted butter, cut into pieces
½ tsp salt
1 c all-purpose flour
4 large eggs
1 ½ c finely grated cheese

For suggestions, e-mail vbaga@inquirer.com.ph.

CHEDDAR Puffs

REDUCE heat and add flour all at once. Cook, stirring vigorously with a wooden spoon, until mixture pulls away from side of pan, about 2 minutes.


REMOVE from heat and cool slightly, then add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. After adding the eggs, mixture should be smooth and glossy.

STIR in grated cheese.

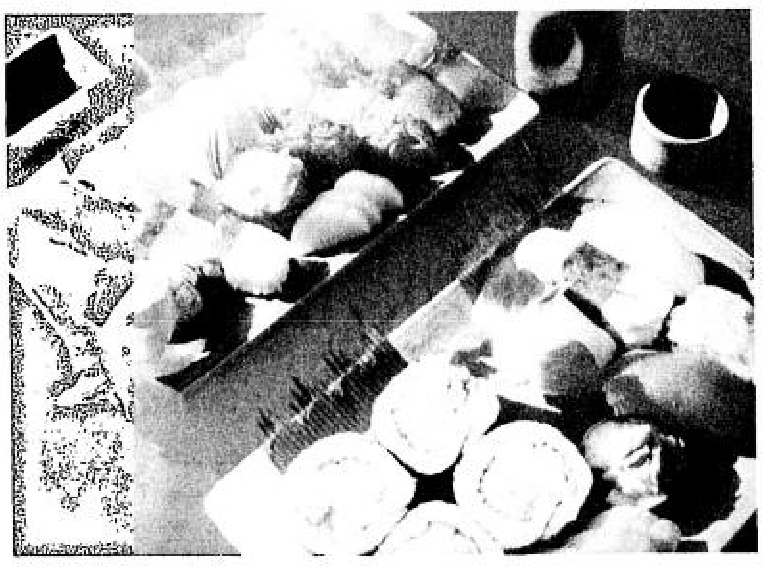
PUT teaspoonfuls of the mixture onto the prepared cookie sheets, leaving a one-inch space between each piece. Place cookie sheets in the upper and lower racks of the oven. Bake for 20 minutes or until puffed, golden and crisp.

'Outrageous' smorgasbord

DINING OUT

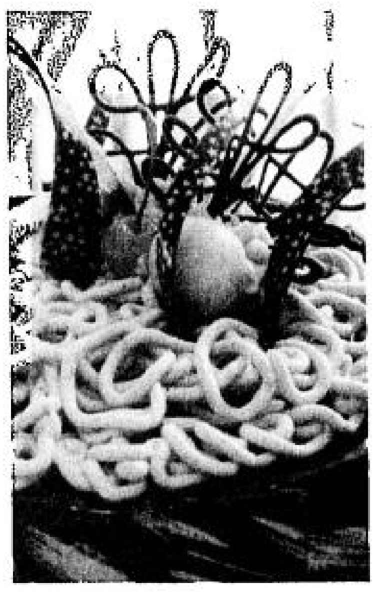
CHILI'S Grill and Bar in Greenhills has launched Outrageous Summer, a smorgasbord of all-you-can-eat appetizers. For only P220, you have a choice of Chips served with salsa, Baked Mussels, Southwestern Eggrolls, Buffalo Wings or Onion Rings, 5-8 p.m., Monday to Friday. Chili's-Greenhills is at Missouri corner Nevada Streets in Northeast Greenhills.

The restaurant also celebrates 30 years of grilling Big Mouth Burgers. The burgers are made from the choicest ingredients and grilled to order: medium, medium well or well done, using either sesame seed or whole wheat bun. It is available in different flavors: Oldtimer, Chipotle Bleu Cheese Bacon Burger, Bacon Burger, BBQ Ranch, Mushroom Swiss, Ground Peppercorn. All Big Mouth Burgers are served with home-style fries.


NIGERIA Sushi Combination at the Sulo Hotel

THIS month, **Dads, Kamayan** and **Saisaki** offer special buffets for graduates. The three-in-one feast features dishes from three different regions. Dads offers a grand Mediterranean Festival while Saisaki holds the Kani Festival. Kamayan showcases the Spices of the Philippines. Guests can join the "Hit the Colors" game and win interesting prizes. Graduates get a free drink and stuffed toy. Call 5316101 or 5317292.

DUSIT Hotel Nikko's featured drink for the month of April is "Plunge." The drink, which comes with a cuddly stuffed toy, is a mixture of vodka, cavendish banana, crème de bananes, syrup and coconut powder. It is available in all hotel outlets for only P400+. From the Deli Shop, get the Chocolate Chestnut Cake this month at P730 net for a whole cake and P85 net per slice. Call 8673333 local 3356.

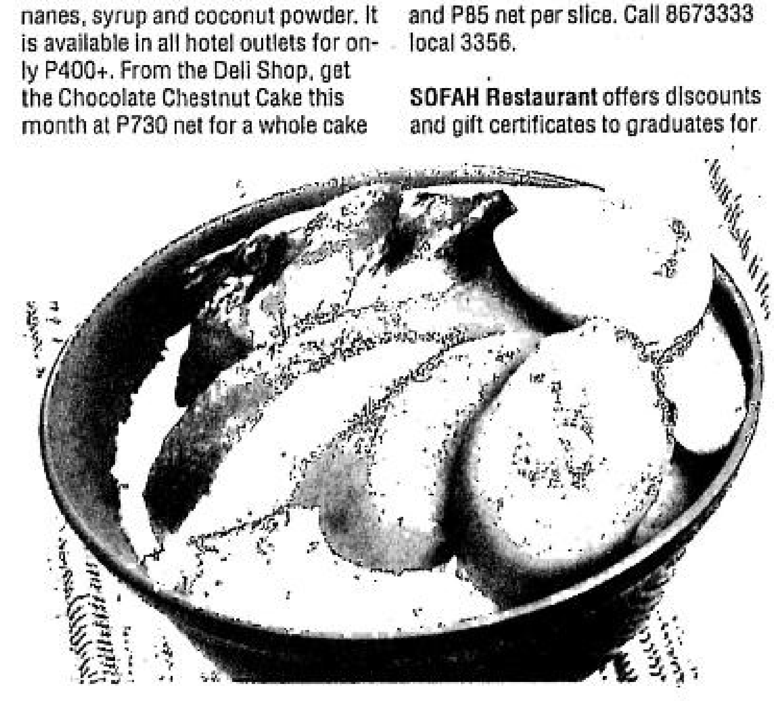

CHOCOLATE Chestnut Cake—April Cake of the Month Deli Shop, Dusit Hotel Nikko

SOFAH Restaurant offers discounts and gift certificates to graduates for meal orders worth at least P1,200. The restaurant specializes in Asian cuisine. Call 5232058, 4006572.

HERITAGE Hotel Manila's Restaurant Riviera features this month "The Heritage Grand Buffet" for lunch and dinner at P950 net (inclusive of 10-percent service charge). It includes regular appetizers like assorted sushi, sashimi and maki, Chawan Mushi (savory egg custard), unagi (eel) with Wasabi Cabbage Salad, Tofu Salad, cold soba and Maguro Teriyaki, among others. Main courses include Subuta (sweet and sour pork) and Sakana Nimono (simmered flat fish in soy sauce) over Yasai Fried Rice. Also available are all kinds of Teppanyaki and Tempura. Call 8548888.

SULO Hotel's Sushi Bar and Teppanyaki Restaurant offers Japanese delights like Sulo Sashimi Moriawase (assorted sashimi specials, including imported hamachi, mackerel, salmon and kani), maguro (tuna), ika (squid), shiromi (lapu-lapu), ebi (prawns), tamagoyaki (sweet omelet), uni (sea urchin), and kanibo (crabstick). Cold sushi variations are also available as well as different ramen (noodle) dishes. Salad lovers also have different varieties to choose from. Get value for money with any of the Bento Box selections. The restaurant opens Monday to Friday for lunch and dinner. Starting April 15, members of Sulo Hotel's Maharlikard program get a 20-percent discount on food and beverages. Call 9245051 to 71 local 671.

THE PALM Court Café offers an all-you-can-eat seafood dinner with Tiger Shrimp Cocktail, Fresh Oysters, Lobster Terrine, Bouillabaisse Marseillaise, Shrimp Tempura, Roasted Gindara, Baked Whole Salmon and more. An international buffet is also available. Children 6-10 years old get a 50-percent discount and kids 5 years old and below dine for free.


SOHO Teahouse serves affordable Chinese meals: rice toppings, noodles and side dishes, including Four Treasures (above), a rice dish topped with delicious slices of chicken, pork, sausage, salted egg and steamed pakchoi. Call 8122226.

How to make paella-stuffed 'Lechon de Leche'

THE REGGIE Aspiras School of Culinary Arts is conducting the following classes:

April 15—Paella-stuffed Lechon de Leche (all new): Make your own Lechon de Leche with Paella Stuffing. Includes soup, salad, sauces and dessert

April 16—Chinese 101-2005 (all new): Chinese-style Tenderloin, Beef with Oyster Sauce, Garlic Prawns, Yang Chow Fried Rice, Salt and Pepper Spareribs, Crispy Noodles with Seafood;

April 18—Gulay Pinoy Style (all new): Delicious Laing, The Real Pakbet with Home-made Bagnet, Lumpiang Mani in Lettuce Leaves, Lumpiang Gulay, Fresh Lumpiang Ubod, Cynthia's Puki-Puki, Labong Ilokano-style with Bangus, Monggo Guisado Done Right. Plus: Master the lost art of lutong bahay vegetables, a technique that works for almost all types of veggies.

April 20—Mom's Recipes for Entertaining (all new): Sopa de Ajo, Calamares, Angus Salpicao, Mom's Lengua, Steamed Fish with Homemade Mayonnaise, Roast Pork with Garlic, Fruit Salad with Marshmallow Cream

Call 9289296, 9273008, 6335162, 6474744, 0917-8399888.

Chef conducts seminar on fruit carving

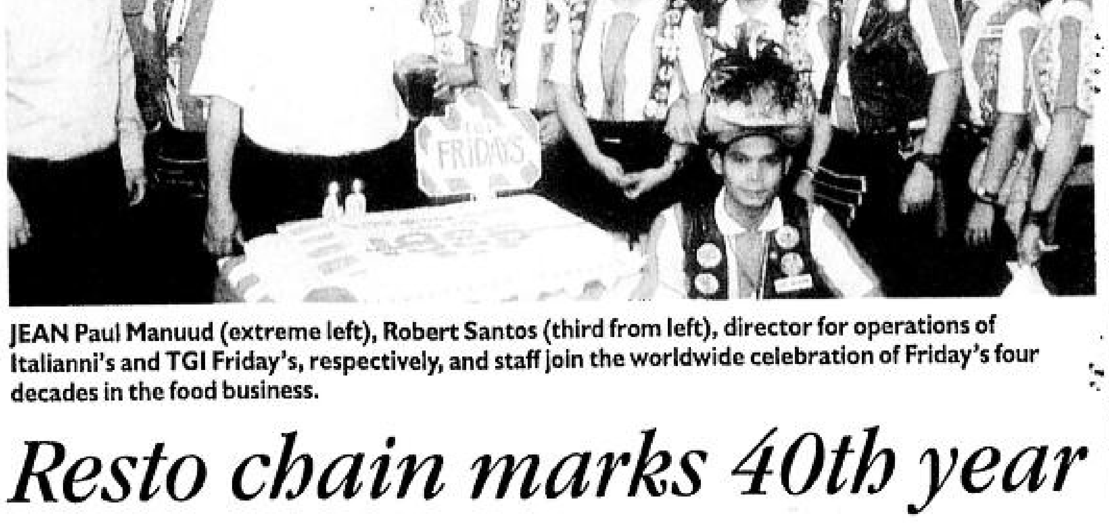
DE LA SALLE-College of Saint Benilde's (DLS-CSB) School of Hotel, Restaurant and Institution Management (SHRIM) offers the Fruit and Vegetable Carving Seminar this summer.

Eliodoro C. Cadawas Jr., a multi-awarded wood, ice, fruit and vegetable carver chef, will conduct the seminar.

The one-day seminar will be conducted 9 a.m.-5 p.m., today until April 16. Fee is P3,000, inclusive of ingredients, handouts and meals.

Cadawas, who runs a school in Chicago, has received the Pamana ng Pilipino award from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. He has developed a set of fruit and vegetable garnishing tools that he will be marketing in the future.

The seminar will be conducted at Room 710 of DLS-CSB Angelo King International Center, Estrada cor. Arellano Streets, Manila. Call 4007407.



JEAN Paul Manuud (extreme left), Robert Santos (third from left), director for operations of Italianni's and TGI Friday's, respectively, and staff join the worldwide celebration of Friday's four decades in the food business.

Resto chain marks 40th year

THE 40TH anniversary of T.G.I.Friday's International was simultaneously marked recently in 54 countries including the Philippines.

Staff and guests of 756 T.G.I.Friday's branches around the world lifted their glasses at a specified time (5:30 p.m. in Manila) and drank a toast to the restaurant chain.

Every Friday thereafter until the end of April, at 5:30 p.m., a staff member in every Friday's restaurant throughout the world initiates a toast.

Friday's Glorietta branch's anniversary bash came complete with a birthday cake, balloons and party favors for everyone.

T.G.I.Friday's also has branches at Robinsons Manila, Hotel Rembrandt-Quezon City, Sta. Lucia East and Alabang Town Center.

As part of the celebration, T.G.I.Friday's conducts a trivia quiz among guests, asking them for fun facts about the chain.

As part of "40 Days of Friday's Fun," every Friday food server will be wearing a "Friday's 40th birthday" shirt. A F-R-I-D-A-Y-S Birthday Bingo from 40 consecutive days will test employees' knowledge of Friday's history and menu, and familiarity with the restaurant's recipes, among others. Bingo participants can win daily and weekly prizes.

The first T.G.I. Friday's restaurant was opened in New York in 1965 by Alan Stillman and was an instant success. Over the past 40 years, Friday's restaurants have helped popularize casual dining.

SUMMER CAMP FOR YOUNG CHEFS
The Center for Culinary Arts (CCA) Manila is holding its Young Chefs Summer Camp for kids and teens starting April 18. Four courses, each designed for a certain age bracket and can be completed in five days, will be offered. Kiddie Kitchen is for kids 7-11 years old. Participants can learn how to make an authentic French Toast, prepare their own pizza and bake their favorite lasagna. Kids 11-14 years old can choose between Asian and Western cuisines. Asian Cuisine covers Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Filipino cooking. The Western cooking course will include lessons on Mexican, American, French, Spanish and Italian dishes. The Classical Cooking and Baking class, an advance course for teens 14-17 years old, will teach basic cooking principles, basic bread-making techniques, and pastry and cake preparation. Other classes are scheduled for May 2-6 and May 16-20. Call 4264840/41.
E-mail marketing@cca-manila.com or visit www.cca-manila.com

Culinary classes for kids and teens

SHARE summer fun with your favorite budding chef by touring the world through food in Maya Kitchen's culinary classes.

A two-day class on "Young People's Cook-In for Teens," 9 a.m.-2 p.m., April 20 and 22, features easy-to-prepare recipes like Angel's Hair Pasta with Classic Tomato Sauce, Salad Twister, Four-Meat Ravioli, Nuggets; Strawberry Mousse Cake, Cathedral Window, Boston Cream Pie and Rumballs. It also offers basic cooking and baking techniques, food presentation and styling.

Kids can have their own cooking adventure on April 19 and 21, 8:30 a.m.-12 nn, through Junior Culinary Workshop for boys and girls aged 6-10. This course covers Hygiene Sanitation and Safety in the Kitchen, Kitchen Math, Table Setting and Napkin Folding. They will learn the recipes of Go, Grow Glow Soup, Egg Nuggets, Beef Macaroni with breadstick, Flower Pot Ice cream dessert; Spooky Cupcakes, Festive Pizza and Sugar Cookies.

Meanwhile, take a culinary journey and experience the life of a full-time culinary student and aspiring chef with two certificate courses offered on April 16-23, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. In Waitering and Bartending Basic, learn the basic set-up, selling techniques, serving and bussing out, napkin folding and skirting, classification of wine and spirits, types of glasses, mixing and serving of drinks.

Finally, learn how to make visually delightful cakes in Cake Decorating (Basic). Attend the lecture-workshop on the fundamentals of cake decorating: coloring, designing, template, icing (boiled, butter, caramel, chocolate and sugar icing), basic borders, jelly lettering, basic flower making and bunching on.

Visit Maya Kitchen (Tuesday to Saturday) at 8/F Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Ave. (formerly Pasay Road), Makati City. Call 8921185/ 8925011 local 108. Or send e-mail to mkitchen@ultimate.info.com.ph.

Singaporean joins SIA's 'panel of experts'

SAM Leong, one of Singapore's prominent culinary personalities, has joined Singapore Airlines (SIA) International Culinary Panel (ICP) of world-renowned chefs.

Yap Kim Wah, Singapore Airlines' senior vice president for product and services, said Leong's inclusion in the ICP would enable the airline to showcase Singaporean masterpieces and raise the Lion City's profile in the international culinary scene.

Leong is director of Kitchens of the Tung Lok Group of restaurants in Singapore. He is behind the modern Chinese cuisine at Singapore's Jade, My Humble House and Space @ My Humble House; and the Paddy Fields Thai Restaurant. Before joining the Tung Lok Group, Leong was part of the team responsible for the overall Chinese food operations of the Four Seasons Hotel in Singapore.

Leong has won several honors including World Gourmet Summit Award of Excellence for "Asian Ethnic Chef of the Year" in 2001, 2002 and 2004.

He will join eight other ICP in designing distinctive signature dishes for Singapore Airlines customers in all classes and on all routes.

Double taco treat

TACO Bell introduces the Double Decker Taco.

In its latest offering, Taco Bell wraps the original crunchy corn taco shell in a layer of beans and soft tortilla. The shell comes with its usual seasoned ground beef, crisp lettuce and imported cheddar cheese.

Taco Bell, one of the largest restaurant chains in the United States, serves tacos, burritos, quesadillas and nachos to more than 35 million customers a week in over 6,500 restaurants.

In the Philippines, it is located at the ground floor of the Gateway Mall, Araneta Center beside the Araneta Coliseum.

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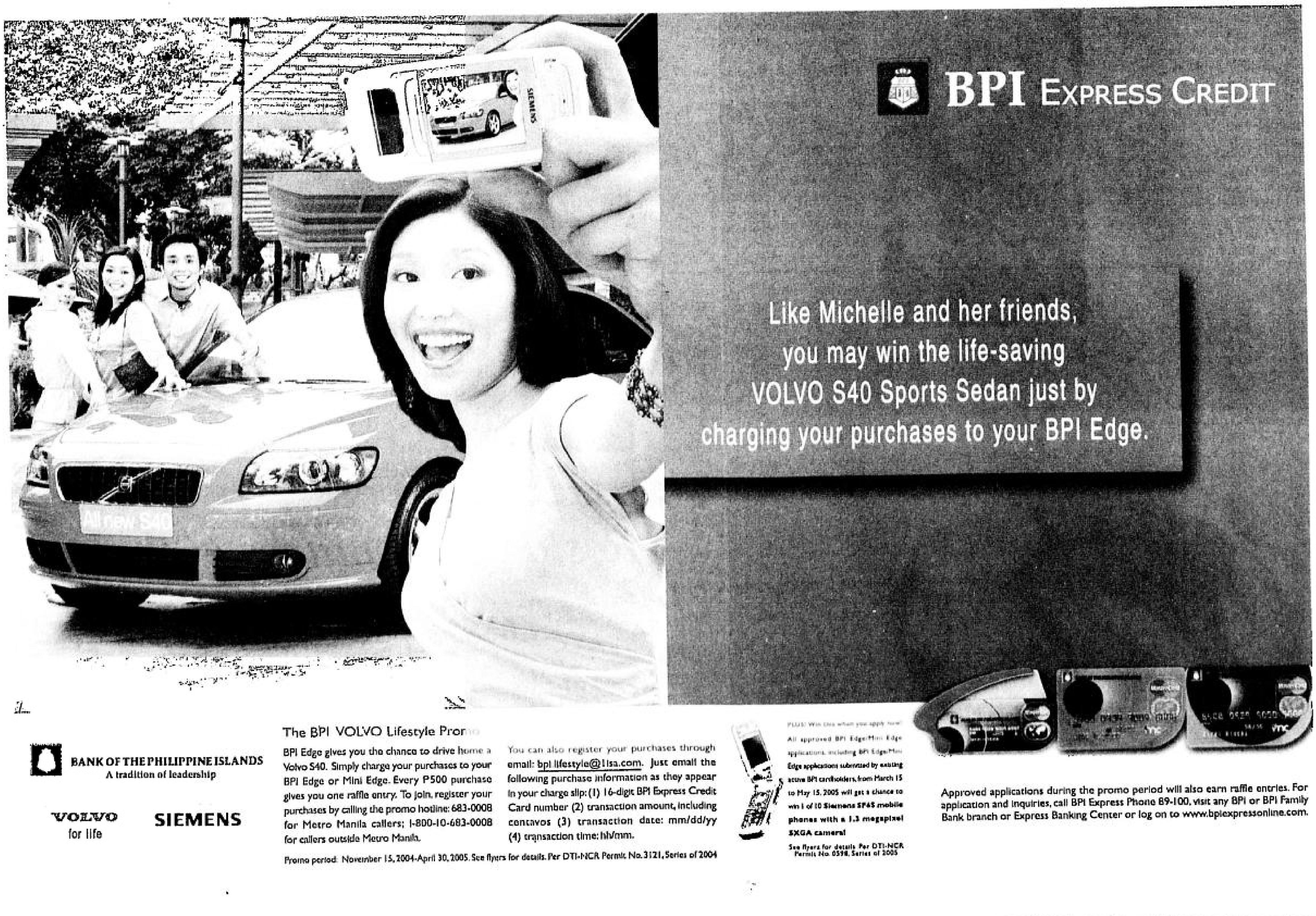

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You can also register your purchases through email: bpi.lifestyle@11sa.com. Just email the following purchase information as they appear in your charge slip: (1) 16-digit BPI Express Credit Card number (2) transaction amount, including centavos (3) transaction date: mm/dd/yy (4) transaction time: hh/mm.

Promo period: November 15, 2004-April 30, 2005. See flyers for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 3121, Series of 2004

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See flyers for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0598, Series of 2005

Approved applications during the promo period will also earn raffle entries. For application and inquiries, call BPI Express Phone 89-100, visit any BPI or BPI Family Bank branch or Express Banking Center or log on to www.bpiexpressonline.com.